

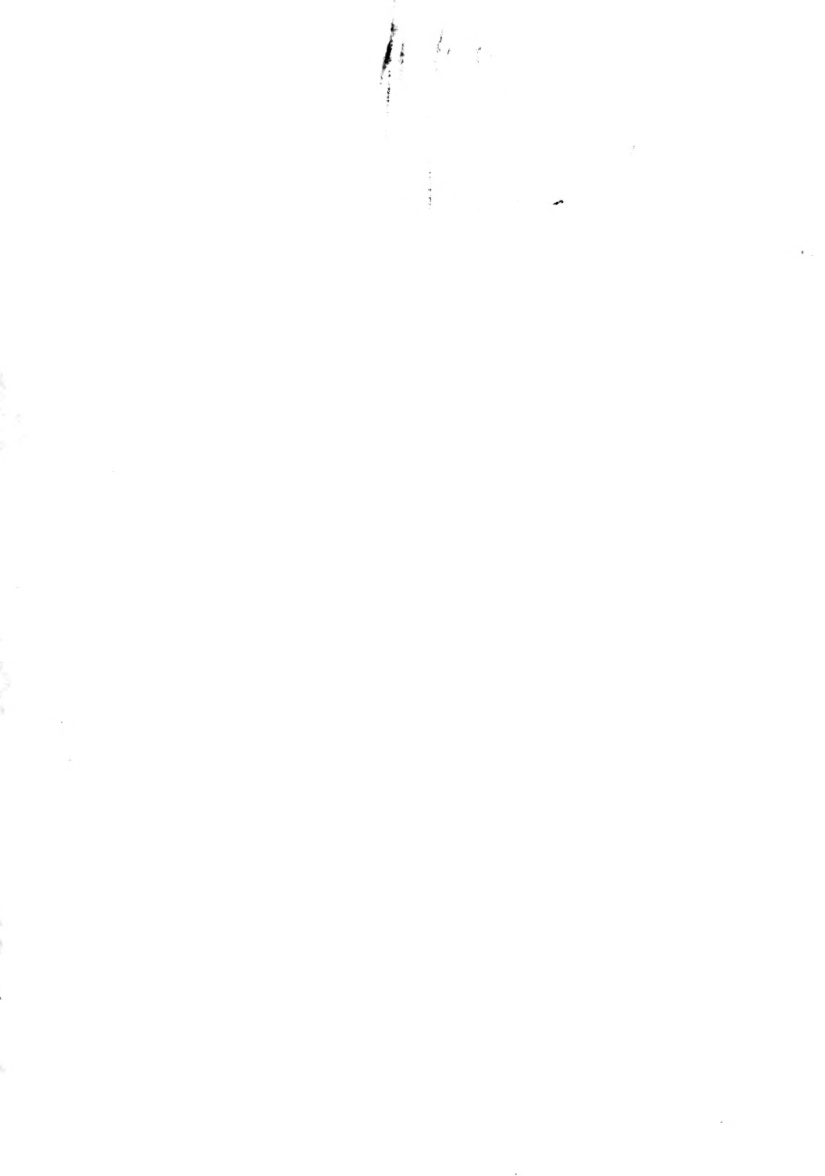
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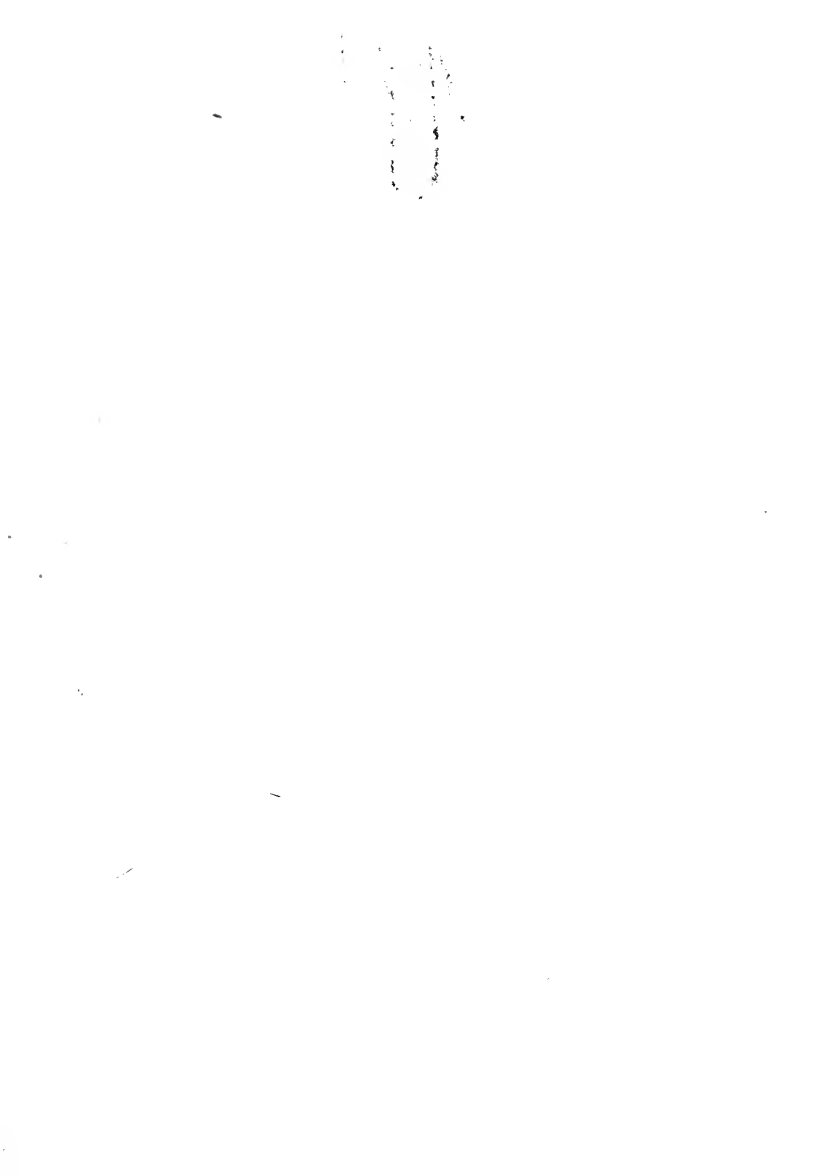


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OUT OF THE NORTHLAND

*STORIES FROM THE NORTHERN
MYTHS*

BY

EMILIE KIP BAKER

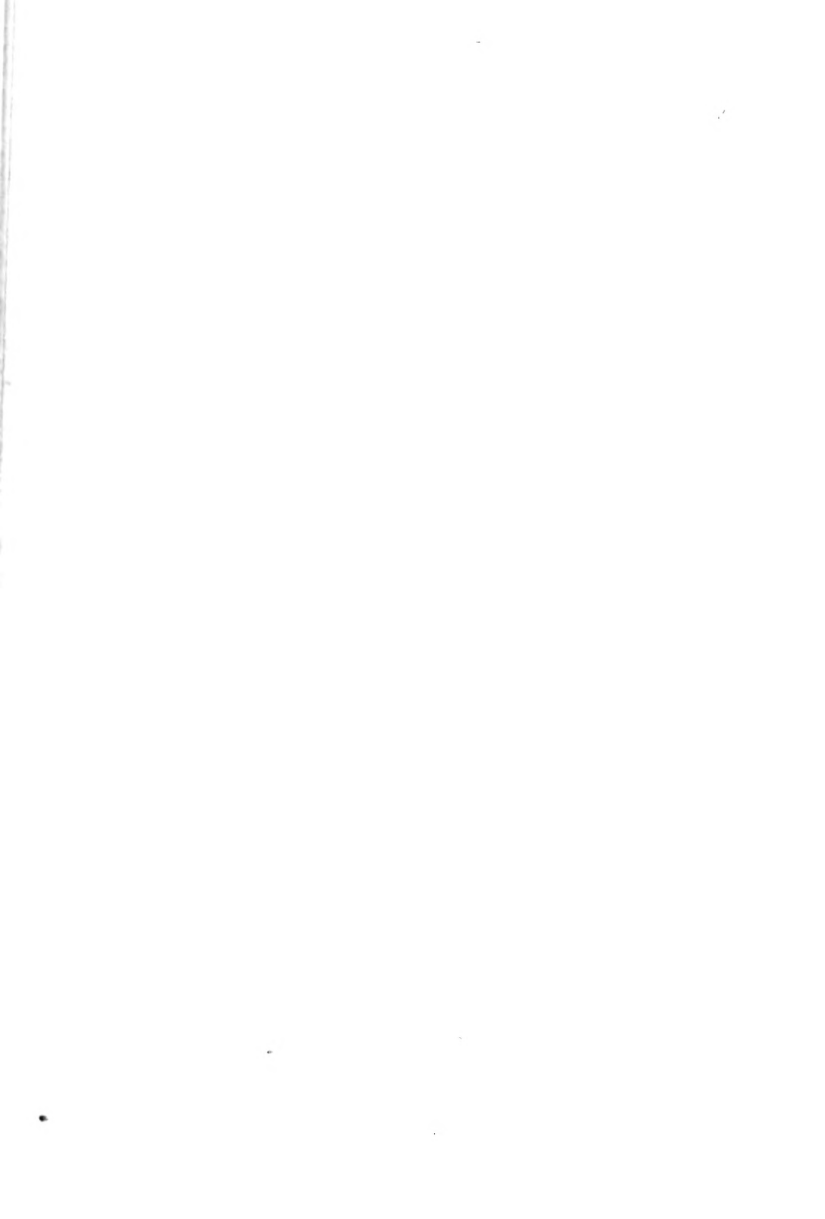
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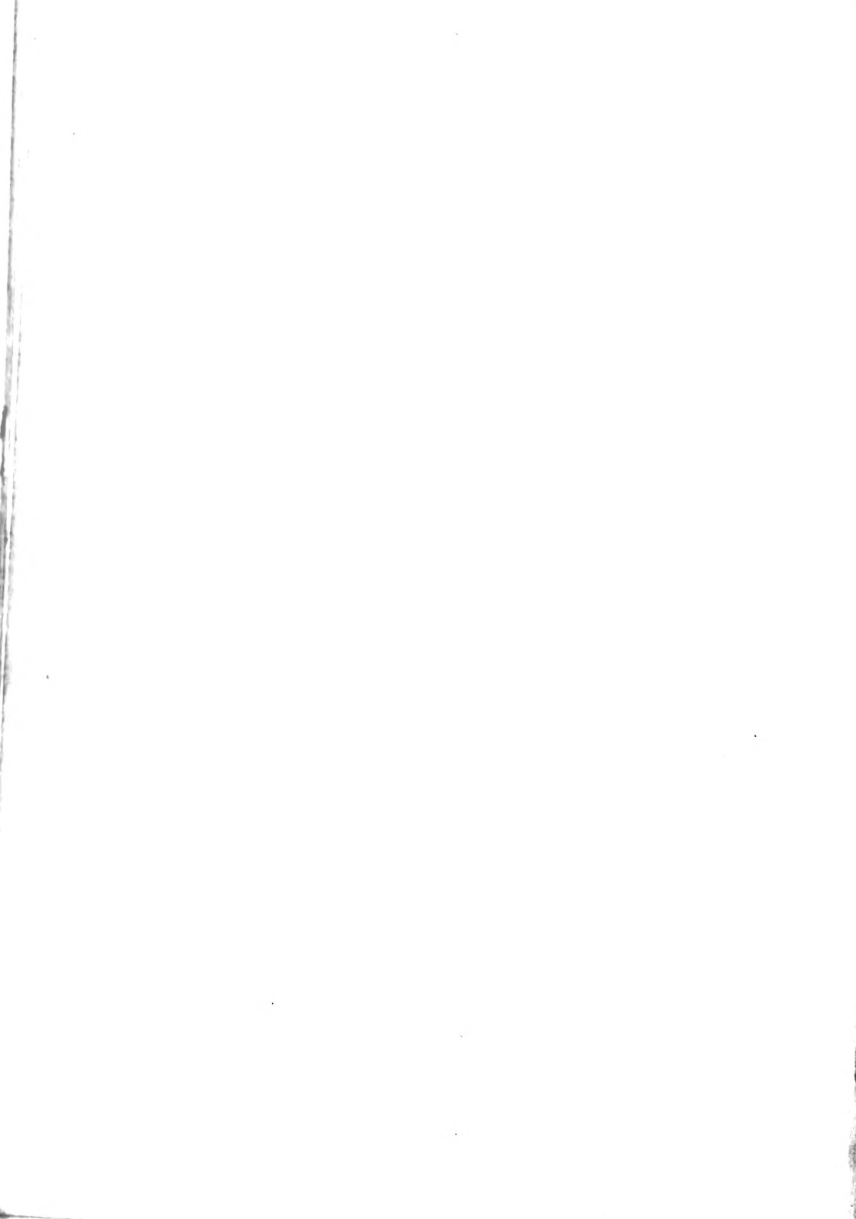


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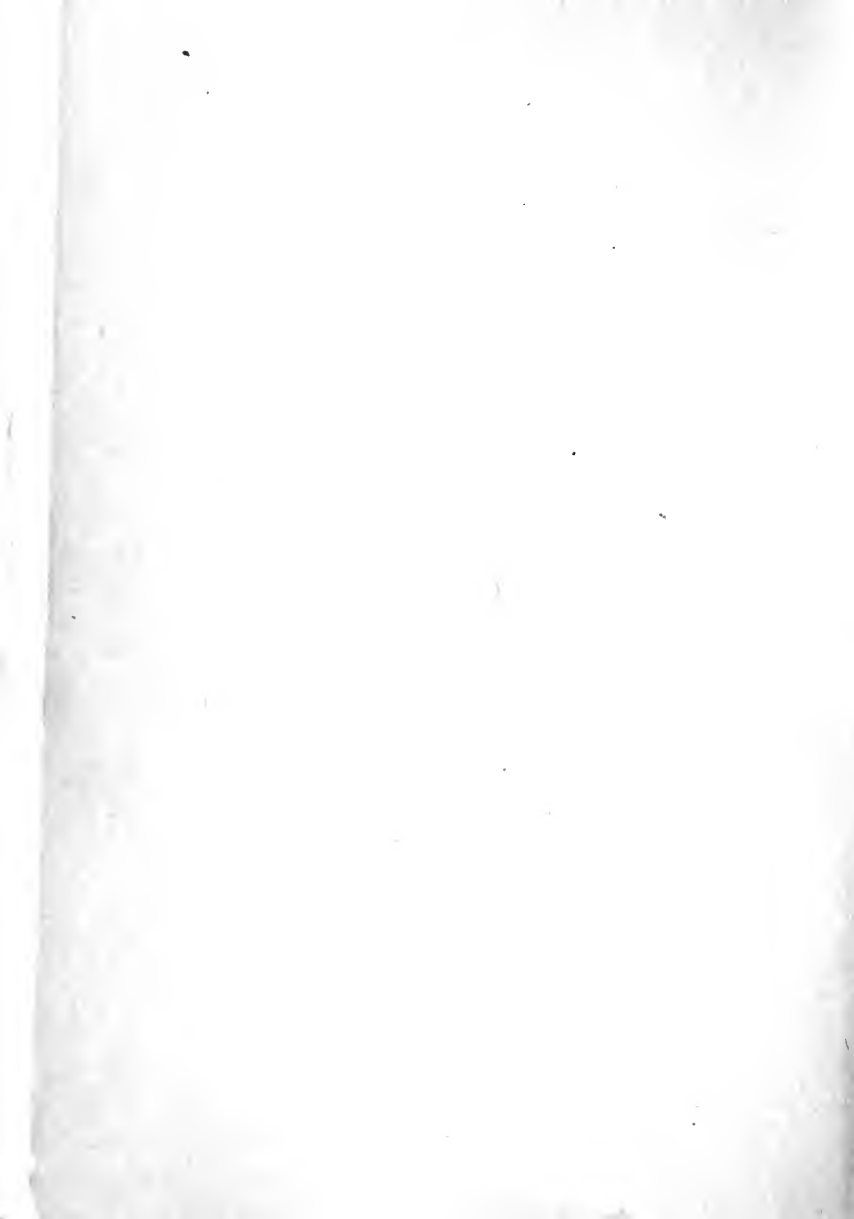
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PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to give to children, in simple form, the stories from Scandinavian mythology which have now become so familiar in literature and music. There has been no attempt to follow the original context closely, and the *Nibelungen-Lied* has been used in conjunction with the Norse myths as giving the more popular version of the Siegfried story. The author has also taken some license in the minor details of the legends, altering them to suit the needs and interests of younger children.



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OUT OF THE NORTHLAND

ODIN

MANY, many years ago there arose from the center of the earth a lofty mountain so high that it reached far into the clouds. On the top of this mountain was a broad, beautiful meadow, and on it stood the shining city of Asgard, the home of the gods. All the streets in the city of Asgard were paved with gold, and the beautiful palaces where the gods dwelt were made of pure white marble and silver; and they shone in the sunlight so bright that to the people who lived below on the earth it was like the brightness and glory of the sun.

In the center of Asgard was the throne of Odin, the greatest and wisest of the gods. This throne was made of purest gold, and studded with precious stones, and at its foot lay a golden footstool which

was of beautiful and wonderful workmanship. On Odin's head was a shining helmet, and in his hand rested a mighty spear made from one of the branches of the great tree Ygdrasil. Over his shoulders was thrown a mantle of deep blue, and this was trimmed about the edge with stars. At Odin's feet lay two wolves which he fed daily from his own hand; and on either side of him perched his two ravens who flew each morning over the earth and brought back to Odin the news of what was going on in the world below. Sometimes they told him of battles and of the brave deeds of heroes; sometimes they brought him news of the swarthy elves who live under the ground and make wonderful things of gold and silver and brass; and sometimes they told him that the great Midgard serpent, who lay with his huge body encircling the whole earth, was lashing the water into foam with his tail, and rolling up the waves till they threatened to cover the earth.

But though Odin ruled over the mid-world of men and the under world of the elves as well as over Asgard, there was one place which he could

not control, and this was the land of the frost
giants, a dreary, frozen country beyond the seas.
Over these giants Odin had no power, for they
were just as old as the gods, and were created
with them at the very beginning of Time. They,
too, were present at the making of the earth, and
in those early days they waged unceasing warfare
with the gods, and compelled them to seek rest
and protection in their shining city of Asgard.
So Odin longed for wisdom which would make ¹⁰
him greater than any of the giants, and able to
fight against them should they come to take pos-
session of Asgard.

There was only one way to get such wisdom
as Odin wanted,—he must go to Mimir's well.
Accordingly, one day he put on his helmet and
mantle, and mounting his eight-legged horse
Sleipnir, he rode over the rainbow bridge that
divides Asgard from the mid-world, or world of
men. This bridge arched high above the earth, ²⁰
and reached from the shining city of the gods to
the farthest end of the world; for in those days
the people believed that if a man could travel

far enough he would come to the limit of the earth.

At the end of the rainbow bridge was the great tree Ygdrasil, the tree of Life, whose roots extended far down into the center of the earth, some branching out into Midgard, the underworld of the swarthy elves; and some reaching to the remotest depths of Niflheim, the dark region of the dead where ruled the terrible goddess Hel.

10 This wonderful tree Ygdrasil also grew upward to a great height, spreading its wide boughs over all the earth. Some of its branches reached even to Asgard, where they overshadowed Odin's hall. The tree of Life was always green; its leaves never withered, for its roots were watered by a stream from Mimir's well. And besides this, the three norns, or fates, who rule the lives of men, sprinkled the leaves daily with water from the sacred Urdar fountain in Asgard.

20 The well which Mimir guarded was the wonderful well of wisdom, and it had stood beside the tree of Life ever since the beginning of the world. No man had ever seen this well, not even the

greatest hero, for only the gods themselves could cross the rainbow bridge which spanned the long distance between Asgard and the tree Ygdrasil. Many times in their journeys to and fro, the gods had come to Mimir's well, but seldom had any one dared to ask for a drink from the old man's ivory horn, for it was well known that Mimir demanded a terrible price in return for one draught from the well. Yet this fear did not make Odin falter in his determination to seek Mimir, and if possible to ¹⁰ become wiser even than Valthrudnir, the frost giant famous for his wisdom. So he mounted his steed Sleipnir, who could travel like the wind because of his eight legs, and crossing the rainbow bridge soon came in sight of the tree of Life and Mimir's well, which was close beside it.

Leaving Sleipnir some little distance behind, Odin advanced alone. At first he could see no one by the well, for the shadow cast by the great tree made everything around seem dim. But ²⁰ presently, as he drew nearer, he perceived a form close by it, and involuntarily he stopped a moment and waited. At the side of the well sat an old, old

man whose long, white beard touched the ground. He held in his hand an ivory horn, and his face was grave and stern, yet kindly. He smiled as he saw Odin approaching, for he knew the Father of the gods by his helmet and mantle, but more by his kingly bearing.

“What does Odin seek so far from sunny Asgard?” said the old man.

“I have come to beg a draught from your well,
10 O Mimir,” answered Odin.

“Whoever asks for that,” said Mimir, “must be willing to give much in return. Many desire to drink its waters, but few will pay the price. What will you give in exchange for wisdom?”

Only a moment did Odin hesitate; then he replied boldly, “I will give anything you ask.”

So Mimir handed him the ivory horn, saying, “Drink then, and the wisdom of the ages shall be yours; but before you go hence, leave with me as
20 a pledge one of your eyes.”

Then Odin drank deep of the well of wisdom, and thereafter was there no one in all the worlds, or even in the Northland, who could be compared

in wisdom to the Father of the gods. None of the dwellers in Asgard ever questioned Odin concerning his visit to Mimir, but they saw the great sacrifice he had made, and loved and honored him for his heroic deed. And whenever Odin visited the earth and mingled among men, they knew him always as the god with only a single eye.

SIF'S GOLDEN HAIR

AMONG the gods there was one who was really unfit to be a god and to live in the shining city of Asgard. He was the cause of much trouble and mischief in his frequent journeys to the earth, and he brought evil upon even the gods themselves. He was small and dark and ugly, and his name was Loki. Nothing could show you how very mean Loki was better than the story of Sif and her golden hair. Sif was the wife of the god
10 of Thunder named Thor. She had beautiful long hair that fell over her shoulders like a shower of gold, and of this she was very proud. One day Sif fell asleep on the steps of Thor's palace, and while she lay there sleeping Loki came walking by. There was nothing so dear to Loki as a chance to do mischief, and he never saw anything beautiful without wishing to spoil it; so when he found Sif fast asleep, he stole up softly behind her and cut off all her golden hair.

When Sif woke at last and saw what had happened, she began to cry bitterly, for her golden hair was the pride and joy of Thor, and she was afraid that he would never want to look at her again now that it was gone. So she got up from the steps where she was sitting and went away to hide in the garden. When Thor came home, he looked for her all through the palace and went from room to room calling her name. Not finding her in the house, he went out into the garden, and after ¹⁰ searching for a long time finally found poor Sif behind a stone, sobbing bitterly. When he heard her story, he tried to comfort her the best he could, but Sif continued weeping and covered her shorn head with her arms.

"I know who did this shameful thing," cried Thor, wrathfully; "it was that mischief-maker Loki, but this time he shall pay dear for his wickedness." And he strode out of the palace with a look so threatening that even the gods might ²⁰ have trembled before him. Now Loki was not expecting to be caught so soon, and he had not thought of seeking a hiding place; so when Thor

came suddenly upon him he was too frightened to try to escape. He even forgot his ready lies, and when Thor shook him angrily and threatened to kill him for his wicked act, he made no denial, only begged for mercy and promised to restore to Sif the hair he had cut off. Thor therefore released him after binding him by a solemn oath to fulfill his promise.

The real hair which Loki had cut off he had 10 already lost, so to keep his word to Thor he must find something else which would resemble it closely enough to make Sif believe she had indeed her own hair again. As there was only one place where skillful and cunning work like this could be done, Loki crossed the rainbow bridge that spans the gulf between Asgard and the earth, and hurried to the tall mountain which hides, amid its rocks, the entrance to the lower world. No one but a god, or one of the swarthy elves themselves, could have 20 found this hidden opening, but Loki knew it well. He first looked for a tiny stream which flowed along at the foot of the mountain. This he followed to its source in a deep cave among the rocks,

and when he came to the spot where it bubbled up from the ground, he raised a huge log that was lying, apparently by chance, close beside it. This disclosed a small passage leading down into the very center of the earth, and along this path Loki hastened, often stumbling about in the darkness, until he came to the underworld where lived the swarthy elves. They were busily engaged in their wonderful workshop, which was lighted only by the fires from the forge, but when they saw Loki ¹⁰ they laid down their tools and asked him how they could serve him.

"I have a task," answered Loki, "which requires such great skill to perform it that I dare not even make the attempt, and so I have brought it to you. It is nothing less than for you to make of your gold some locks of hair that will be as soft and fine and beautiful as the golden hair which adorns the head of Sif, the wife of Thor. You have heard no doubt of its beauty, so you know ²⁰ how difficult a task I have given you."

The elves, nothing daunted, set at once to work, and selecting a bar of perfect gold, they pounded

it very soft, then spun it into threads so fine that they looked like sunbeams, and so soft that they felt like silk. When the work was finished and placed in Loki's hand, it exceeded in beauty anything he had ever seen, and he felt sure that Thor could not complain of his gift. Then he thanked the swarthy elves and hastened with his prize back to Asgard and to the palace of Thor, where all the gods had assembled to see the fulfillment of Loki's
10 promise. In spite of the success of his undertaking, the fear of Thor's hasty temper kept Loki somewhat humbled, for the Thunderer had been known to crush the object of his anger with his hammer when once his wrath was fully roused. His face was now dark and threatening as Loki approached, and beside him stood Sif, weeping bitterly, and trying to cover her head with her hands. But Loki came up boldly and placed the golden hair which the elves had made, upon her
20 head. To the astonishment of all, it immediately grew fast, and no one could have told that it was not her own golden hair. So Sif was proud and happy once again, and Loki was forgiven.

THE HAMMER OF THOR

NEXT to Odin, the All-father, the greatest of the gods was Thor, because in his possession was the wonderful hammer Mjöllnir. This hammer was forged by the swarthy elves, and was so strong that it could crush mountains. It also had the magic power of returning to Thor's hand, no matter how far he might hurl it. When Thor swung it above his head, fierce lightning flashed in the sky, and as he rode through the clouds, the noise of his chariot wheels sounded on the earth like the crash-^{ing} of thunder. Thor alone, of all the gods, never rode on horseback, but always traveled in his chariot drawn by two swift goats; and he alone never crossed the rainbow bridge to the earth, for fear that some flash of lightning might destroy it.

It was well for the gods that Thor had his mighty Mjöllnir, for the frost giants sometimes

left their dreary homes in the frozen Northland, and tried to take possession of the shining city of Asgard. Many a fierce battle had been fought between the gods and the giants, and many times the gods might have been defeated by their powerful enemy had not Thor been at hand to aid them and crush the giants with the blows of his mighty hammer. So Asgard was safe from the frost giants as long as Mjöllnir lay in the hand of
10 Thor.

One day the god of Thunder, as Thor was often called, came back from a long, hard journey, and being very tired he dropped down on the steps of his palace and fell into a heavy sleep. When at length he awoke, he found, to his horror and dismay, that Mjöllnir was no longer in his hand or by his side. Some one must have come while he was sleeping and stolen it away. Of course it was one of the frost giants, for none of the gods,
20 not even the mischief-loving Loki, would have dared to commit this theft. But no one had seen any of the giants lurking about Asgard, and Odin's ravens had not met with them in their flights to

and from the earth. Yet it must have been the giants who had stolen Mjöllnir, and it must be recovered speedily or the whole race would soon come to take possession of Asgard, now that its chief means of defense was gone. So Thor went in haste to Loki, and begged him to devise some plan to recover the hammer.

“I will go myself,” said Loki, “and see if I can find out who has stolen Mjöllnir. Perhaps we can regain it before it is too late, for the thief¹⁰ may not yet have spread the news of its capture.” Thor was ready to welcome any suggestion, so he readily agreed to this plan, and Loki hurriedly put on his swiftest shoes, and sped northward across the frozen sea till he came to the home of the frost giants, a land of icebergs and snow-covered mountains, and dreary with the cold of eternal winter.

He walked for a long time without meeting any one, but at last he found the giant Thrym²⁰ seated on the side of a mountain, counting his flock of sheep. The giant was very ugly, and he was also terribly big and strong. But Loki felt no fear;

and went up boldly and greeted him. Thrym did not seem at all surprised at seeing Loki beside him, but he looked rather uneasily around, and went on counting his sheep without replying to Loki's greeting. The cunning god then instantly surmised that here was the thief who had taken Thor's hammer; so, in threatening tones, he accused the giant of the theft, and demanded that Mjöllnir be at once returned. It was a bold
10 stroke, but it did not deceive Thrym in the least; for he knew that Loki was making mere empty threats, since Mjöllnir was no longer in Asgard. Then Loki made the giant many promises of rich rewards from Odin and told him of the good-will which all the gods would have for him if he returned the hammer to Thor. At this Thrym began to laugh, and he laughed so loud that the trees upon the mountain shook. Then he tore up by the roots a huge oak tree and threw it
20 like a straw into the sea, and turning to Loki, said: "You will never find that hammer, friend Loki, for I have buried it nine fathoms in the earth, and neither you nor Thor shall ever see

it again. On one condition only will I return it, — one of the goddesses at Asgard must come here and be my wife.”

This proposal rather staggered Loki, for he knew how impossible such a thing was. But he said nothing, only bade Thrym good-by and hastened back to Asgard.

When Loki reported to Odin the result of his journey, the gods held a council to decide what it was best to do. Of course it was out of the question to try to induce any of the goddesses to become Thrym's wife, and Odin could not feel justified in demanding such a sacrifice. Some other plan must be thought of, and the gods again turned to Loki for help, for he alone was clever enough to outwit the giant.

“There is no way to recover Mjöllnir,” said Loki, “except by giving Thrym a bride; and since we cannot send any of the goddesses to the cold north-land, we must find the giant another wife. Let us dress up Thor like a woman and send him instead.”

“Never,” roared Thor; “I should be the laughing-stock of every one in Asgard.”

“Nonsense,” replied Loki, who rather enjoyed having Thor at his mercy; “and what if you were? Is that anything compared to seeing the whole race of frost giants at the gates of Asgard? If something is not done very soon, they will be ruling here in our places.”

At length Thor consented, though much against his will, and Loki put on him a rich robe embroidered with gold, and wound a chain about his neck ¹⁰ and put a beautiful girdle at his waist. Then he threw over Thor's head a long bridal veil, while he attired himself as a waiting maid to attend the bride. The gods harnessed Thor's milk-white goats to the chariot, and together Thor and Loki set out for the frost giants' country.

When Thrym beheld the bridal party coming, he was filled with joy and ran to meet them. He wished very much to raise the bride's veil, but Loki forbade him until after the wedding ceremony. ²⁰ “It is the goddess Frigga who has come to be your wife,” said Loki, “and you must not distress her with your attentions, or she may grow frightened and wish to return to Asgard.” So Thrym

obeyed Loki's command, and led the bride to his palace, where his kinsmen were assembled. There they found the tables spread with meat and wine as if for a feast. Thrym urged his bride to partake of the fruits and delicacies which had been brought especially for her, and with some show of reluctance the supposed woman began to eat. First she devoured eight large salmon, then twelve roasted birds, and followed this up with eating a whole ox and drinking three barrels of mead. 10

"Did ever woman eat like this one?" thought the giants, and in their hearts they pitied Thrym for getting such a wife. But Thrym was too happy to notice the bride's appetite, and he cried to his brother, "Bring hither the hammer Mjöllnir and place it in the bride's lap; then let us be wedded in the name of Var." So the hammer was brought and placed in Thor's hand; but the minute his fingers closed around it he tore the veil from his face, and the terrified giants beheld not 20 the mild countenance of Frigga, but the face of the Thunderer himself. It was too late now to escape, and the giants were too frightened to move, as

Thor swung his hammer twice around his head and the thunder and lightning mingled with the crash of falling buildings which buried the giants beneath its ruins. Thus did Mjöllnir return at last to Asgard.

BALDER

IN all the city of Asgard there was no god so beautiful or one so dearly loved as Balder. Wherever he went it was like the coming of sunshine, and all sorrow and grief fled away before the brightness of his presence. In all his happy life he had never known a moment's sadness, and the gods believed that none could ever come to him. So beautiful and joyous and free from care was Balder that he seemed to the gods to be the one among them who surely could never share in ¹⁰ the final doom which they knew awaited all the dwellers in Asgard.

The days passed happily for Balder, and no thought of sorrow crossed his untroubled mind, until one night he had a dream which filled him with strange fear. When the gods met again in council he told them his dream. They tried to laugh and banish his fears, but at heart they too

read a dark foreboding in the dream, for it spoke of coming evil, even of death. So full of sadness did the gods become at the thought of losing Balder, that they cared no longer to join in their accustomed games, or to make merry, while some tragic fate might be overshadowing the bright and joyous youth.

Determined to avert if possible the unknown danger, Balder's mother, Frigga, went out one day ¹⁰ from her palace and wandered over the whole earth; and as she went she begged everything which she met to swear by a solemn oath never to hurt Balder. Fire, water, rocks, trees, iron, brass, birds, and beasts, — all were bound by a vow to do no harm to him. And everything on earth gave the promise gladly, for all the world loved the bright and joyous Balder. As Frigga was returning home, she saw just outside the gates of Asgard a small plant called the mistletoe; but it looked ²⁰ so harmless that she passed it by without asking for the promise, and hurried on to tell Odin of the success of her journey.

When the gods heard how everything had sworn

never to hurt Balder, there was gladness again among them; and then to prove whether all the things which had given the promise would really keep their word to Frigga, the gods placed the youth as a target before them, and hurled at him huge stones and sharp-pointed spears and the weapons which they used in battle; but each missile turned aside, and refused to hurt the shining Balder. Even the deadly battle-axes fell harmless at his feet. Now Loki, who always hated every-¹⁰ thing beautiful, and who was jealous of Balder because the gods loved him, stood by watching the game. His heart was full of bitterness and envy, and he hated the glorious youth who could be so confident and secure in the love which all the world had owned for him.

One day a strange old woman came to the palace of Frigga and asked to have speech with her. The goddess was sitting with her maidens spinning, and when the old woman was admitted to her²⁰ presence she spoke to her kindly and asked the object of her visit.

“I have come, lady,” said the old woman, who

was really Loki in disguise, "to learn what is going on here in Asgard that the shouts of joy reach even to the earth. I hear laughter and cheering in the court where the gods are at their games. Tell me, what does it mean?" Then Frigga smiled happily, and said, "It means that the gods are hurling their battle-axes at Balder and trying to wound him, but he stands before them unhurt, for everything on earth has sworn to me to do him no harm."

"Has everything indeed made you this promise?" asked Loki.

"Yes," answered Frigga; "everything except a little plant called the mistletoe, and this looked so small and weak that I did not ask it to promise."

"And does this mistletoe grow far from here?" continued the pretended old woman.

"Just at the gates of Asgard," answered Frigga. And Loki, having learned what he wished, left the palace exulting in the ease with which he had deceived the unsuspecting goddess. Laying aside his disguise, he sought the place where the mistletoe grew, and cutting off a branch, he shaped it

into an arrow. Then he went to join the gods in their sport.

Just outside the circle of the players stood Hödur, silent and alone, for he was blind and could not share in the games. Going up to him, Loki said: —

“Why do you not join in the sport, Hödur, and throw something at the wonderful Balder?”

“Because I cannot see where he is standing,” answered Hödur, “and besides, I have no weapon to throw.”

“If that is all,” said Loki, “come with me, and I will give you an arrow and help you shoot it.” So he led Hödur forward, and the blind god followed him willingly, for he dreamed of no evil.

Then Loki put the arrow into his hand, and directed his aim so well that the fatal arrow flew straight to Balder’s heart, and in a moment the beautiful god lay dead.

There was mourning now in Asgard, and over all the earth. The sun no longer shone with his accustomed brightness; the birds stopped their singing, and the flowers drooped their heads;

even the beasts felt the sadness that lay over all the earth, and crouched silent in their dens. Everything that loved the shining Balder now wept and mourned for him. Then the gods arrayed his body in the finest cloth of gold, and brought it down to the sea, where Balder's ship lay close to the water's edge. Very sadly they laid the body upon its deck, and lit the funeral fires beneath it. Then they pushed it out into the
10 water, and the burning ship drifted away toward the sea, bearing with it the light and joy of Asgard. A silence fell on all the watchers, and great sorrow filled their hearts. All the world seemed under a shadow, and in the solemn stillness no sound was heard but the roaring of the flames on the burning ship. The gods stood upon the shore watching the funeral pyre, and, mingled with their sadness, was a dread foreboding of evil; for outside the ring of the shining ones of Asgard was
20 another group of watchers,—the frost giants, who seemed to be looking on in mockery at the solemn rites, and now and then drew nearer, their tall forms looming up grim and threatening and terrible.

Then as the burning ship drifted slowly westward toward the sea, and Balder passed forever from their sight, the gods returned sadly to Asgard. But Odin could not give up Balder without one last effort to reclaim him. So he harnessed his swiftest horses and bade the god Hermod ride with all speed to Helheim, the awful region of the dead, and offer a ransom to the goddess Hel if she would give Balder back to Asgard. Nine days and nights Hermod rode through the earth, in ^{to} darkness so thick that his horses could not see where to step. It was a black and steep and fearful road down to Helheim, and only on Odin's horses could the journey have been made. At length Hermod reached the gloomy palace and came face to face with the terrible queen who ruled over the kingdom of the dead. Hermod trembled with fear as he looked about him, but his love for Balder gave him courage and he stepped up boldly before the goddess, saying:—

20

“I have come to beg a boon of thee, O Hel. Your land is full without the shining Balder, and Asgard is empty and lonely since he has gone.

Every heart mourns for him, and every eye is filled with tears. Give him back to us."

Slowly and sternly Hel replied: "Is there indeed no dry eye upon the earth? If it be true, as thou sayest, that everything weeps for Balder, he shall return to Asgard; but if there is one who will not weep, he shall stay forever in Helheim."

Then Hermod hurried with the message back to Asgard, and when Odin heard the answer Hel had made, he gave the command, and everything upon the earth wept and mourned for Balder. But among the mourners in Asgard there was one old woman whom Odin spied standing apart and shedding no tear.

"Weep," he cried, "weep, for Balder that he may return."

"Nay," replied the old woman, "I will not weep. He has done naught for me that I should mourn him. Let him stay in Helheim." And with a mocking laugh she hurried away, and Odin knew that it was Loki.

So Balder never came back to Asgard.

IDUNA'S APPLES

THOUGH sorrow had indeed come to the people of Asgard, and they shared the burden of grief together with the human race, yet as gods they had one privilege which belonged to them alone, — the blessing of eternal youth. Sickness and old age never came within the gates of Asgard.

And this was because the goddess Iduna had some very wonderful apples which gave, to those who ate of them, the strength and beauty of youth.

In appearance they were much like other apples, ¹⁰ of a beautiful red and gold; but when the gods had eaten of them they knew that such fruit could not be found anywhere outside of Asgard. For no other apples could bestow eternal youth except those in Iduna's casket.

The goddess herself was very proud of her treasures, and proud, too, of the confidence which Odin placed in her in making her the guardian of

a thing so priceless. The casket in which she kept the apples had only a single key, and this Iduna kept fastened to her girdle. Wherever she went she carried the precious casket with her, and never let it be for a moment out of her sight. The gods felt no uneasiness while the apples were in such safe keeping, and there seemed to be no reason why they should ever lose the beauty and health and youth which had always been theirs.
10 But one day both Iduna and her golden apples disappeared from Asgard, and no one knew where they had gone, — no one but Loki, and he would not tell. This is how it happened.

Odin and Loki and Hœnir once went on a visit to the land of the frost giants. It was an uncomfortable journey, for the air was bitterly cold and the ground hard and frozen, and there was no pleasure in traveling through such a bleak, cheerless country. They were hungry, too, and
20 could find nothing to eat; no game to kill, no fish to catch, not even any wild berries upon the barren hillsides. So Odin proposed that they return at once to Asgard. But just then Loki

saw a herd of cows grazing near by, and exclaimed:—

“Here is meat in abundance. Let us eat before we set out again on our journey.”

Then he killed the fattest of the cows, and bore it on his shoulder to the spot where Odin and Hœnir were already building a fire. They cut the meat and put it upon a spit, and while Loki turned it, the two others piled logs upon the fire. Now and then they tasted the flesh, thinking it ¹⁰ must be cooked, but each time it was as raw as when they had first cut it. Then Odin threw on more logs, and the heat became so intense that the gods could hardly stand near it, but still the meat remained uncooked. All night long they took turns cooking and tending the fire, but morning found them hungrier than ever and with yet no prospect of a meal. This was too much for even the good-natured Hœnir, while Loki became so angry and disgusted that he would have killed ²⁰ the whole herd of cows and thrown them into the sea. But Odin laughed, and said:—

“Nay, Loki, do not let us vent our anger so

foolishly. We will return, rather, to Asgard, and tell the gods that, in spite of the drink from Mimir's well, the frost giants are yet wiser than Odin."

Just then there came a loud noise and a whirring of wings overhead, and looking up, they saw a large eagle hovering above them.

"Ha, ha," he cried, "so you cannot cook your dinner, I see. The meat must be tough indeed that will not yield to such a fire. But give me your promise that you will share the feast with me, and I will pledge you to get it cooked."

The gods promised very gladly, and the eagle, moving nearer, said: —

"Stand aside and let me blow the fire first."

Suspecting nothing, the gods moved away, and as they did so the eagle swooped down, and seizing in his strong claws all the meat that was on the spit, he flapped his huge wings and rose slowly
20 into the air.

When the gods saw that the eagle meant to trick them, they grew very angry, and Loki, hoping to snatch his prize from the treacherous eagle,

grasped one end of the spit as it rose into the air and endeavored to drag it downward. But the eagle's strength was greater than his own, and it rose higher and higher, carrying the luckless Loki with it. Up it soared, far above the heads of the bewildered Hœnir and Odin, who were helpless to rescue their comrade, and could only stand by and watch him disappearing from view. Over the frozen sea and the snow-covered mountains the eagle carried the unhappy Loki, not pausing in its flight until they reached a huge iceberg. Here it stopped, and dropped Loki upon the ground. But the moment it alighted it was no longer an eagle, but the giant Thiassi. He grinned maliciously and said:—

“How do you like flying, friend Loki?”

Loki was in such a rage that he was tempted to try to hurl the giant from the iceberg. He knew, however, that this would only shut him off from a speedy return to his companions, so he restrained his anger, and said:—

“You can indeed rival the gods in swiftness, and I should be glad to journey farther with you;

but Odin demands my return to Asgard. Take me back to him, therefore, with all speed."

The giant laughed at Loki's assumed boldness, and answered: "The gods are great indeed, but the frost giants have no fear of them. Odin may need you in Asgard, but you shall not return except on one condition,—that you promise to deliver into my power the goddess Iduna and her golden apples."

10 For some time Loki did not answer, for he hardly dared to make such a promise, since the loss of Iduna from Asgard would mean old age and possible death to the gods; but yet he did not want to remain any longer on the iceberg. At last he said:—

"I will promise."

The giant knew Loki's reputation for cunning, and therefore he demanded that the god should swear by an oath to keep his promise. Loki did this, 20 though with great reluctance, and the giant then assumed his eagle plumage and carried him swiftly back to the place where Odin and Hœnir were still standing by the burnt-out fire. In answer to their

questions he told them of his strange journey, but made no mention of his promise to the giant. Then the three gods returned to Asgard.

Some time later, Loki went to the palace of Iduna and asked for one of her apples. The goddess willingly brought out her casket, but as she handed Loki an apple she said: —

“Why does Loki seek me again when he came here only a short time ago? Has he sickened or aged thus quickly?” 10

“Nay,” replied Loki, “it is not for that reason that I desire to taste the apples again, but because I wish to assure myself that they are really the best apples in the world.”

“Why, where would you find such as these?” asked Iduna, in surprise.

“Just beyond the gates of Asgard,” answered Loki, “is a wonderful tree which bears fruit in all respects like these apples you prize so highly. I think they look even fresher, and as I tasted them 20 I felt sure that they were finer in flavor than any you have here. It is a pity you cannot go and see them.”

“Is it far from here?” asked the goddess, wistfully.

“No indeed,” replied Loki; “just outside the city gates. And they are so fine as they hang in the sunlight, and so easy to reach too. But I must be away, for Odin has a commission for me to-day.” So saying he took his departure, and Iduna was left alone.

For a long time she thought over what Loki had
10 said, and the longing grew very strong to go and see those apples which he had declared were even finer than her own. She dared not go away and leave her casket behind, but there surely could be no harm in taking it with her just a little way outside the gates of Asgard. Still she was doubtful and troubled, and wished that her husband, Bragi, were at home, that she might ask his advice. For a long time she hesitated, but at last her curiosity grew too strong to be resisted, and with
20 her casket on her arm she left the palace and hurried outside the city gates. She looked carefully all about her, but she saw no tree such as Loki had described. Discouraged and disappointed,

she was about to return home, when she heard a loud noise overhead, and looking up, saw a large eagle flying toward her. In a moment it had rushed down upon her, and before the terrified goddess realized what had happened, it had caught her up in its strong claws, and was carrying her above the tree tops. In vain did she scream and struggle. The eagle soared higher and higher, carrying her far out of sight, and it flew across the mountains and over the frozen sea till it came to ¹⁰ the dreary northland. Here it took the form of the terrible giant Thiassi, who shut up poor Iduna in his ice-walled palace, and kept her there a long, long time, not caring though she grew pale and sick and lonely with longing to return to sunny Asgard.

Meantime, the gods were greatly troubled at the sudden disappearance of Iduna, and her husband, Bragi, sought her, sorrowing, over all the earth. No one had seen her leave Asgard, and none knew where she had gone or when she would return, ²⁰ — none save Loki, and he very wisely kept silent. At first the gods did not realize what the loss of Iduna and her apples meant to them; but as

time went on and they felt weariness and old age creeping over them, they were filled with fear lest the goddess might never return, and there would be no longer any way to keep Death without the gates of Asgard. Odin's calm brow now became clouded, for not even his great wisdom was of any help in solving the mystery of Iduna's strange disappearance. The ravens, flying far and wide each day, brought no news of the missing goddess, and
10 meanwhile Time was leaving its unwelcome marks on the faces of the gods and goddesses. Frigga's hair began to turn white, and wrinkles furrowed the fair cheeks of Freya. The mighty Mjöllnir now trembled in the unsteady hand of Thor, and the feeble fingers of Bragi could no longer draw sweet music from his harp ; in fact, all the dwellers in Asgard were growing old, and there was no way for them to renew their youth.

One day the ravens whispered to Odin that he
20 should question Loki in regard to Iduna's disappearance, and Loki was summoned to appear before Odin's throne. When accused of knowing something of the missing goddess, he at first stoutly

denied all knowledge of her, but Odin's look seemed to search his thoughts, and he saw that lying and deceit were of no avail. So he told all that he had done, and begged Odin's forgiveness, promising to set out at once in search of the stolen goddess, and not return to Asgard until he had found her. And he furthermore promised to bring both Iduna and her apples safely home again. He then borrowed the falcon plumage of Freya, and flew over to the frozen Northland where the giant kept Iduna a ¹⁰ prisoner in his ice palace. He found her sitting alone, and weeping bitterly. She was overjoyed when Loki assumed his own form and told her why he had come, and she even forgave him for the misery he had led her into by his treachery. Then again in his falcon plumage, Loki grasped the goddess gently and flew with her straight toward Asgard. The giant had been out all day fishing, and when he came home and found Iduna gone he knew that some of the gods had come to her rescue. ²⁰ Nevertheless he determined not to lose her so easily, and taking the form of an eagle he followed in pursuit. Soon he saw the falcon and its burden

in the distance. So he redoubled his speed, and his great wings brought him rapidly nearer the falcon, whose labored flight seemed to make an escape from the enemy impossible.

At Asgard the gods had assembled on the city walls, and they were now looking anxiously across the earth, fearing that some misfortune had overtaken Loki. Now at last they saw the falcon flying toward them, and could dimly discern the form 10 which he was carrying. But with the joy of this discovery came sudden doubt and fear as they saw the eagle following close behind the falcon, and seemingly in hot pursuit. These fears were confirmed as the birds drew nearer, and the gods knew that if they would save Loki and Iduna, something must be done at once. Nearer and nearer came the falcon, but though his flight was swift, he was encumbered by his burden and the eagle was steadily gaining on him. By this time the gods 20 had built a great pile of wood on the city walls, and were waiting until the falcon with his precious burden had flown across it. The moment Loki passed they quickly set fire to the wood, and as

the eagle came rushing blindly on, it flew directly over the flames, which caught its feathers and drew it down into the fire, burning it to death.

Iduna and her apples were safe at last in Asgard, and to celebrate her return Odin made a great feast in his palace hall, and the gods ate again of the golden fruit and became young and beautiful once more.

THE BINDING OF THE FENRIS WOLF

IN the very beginning of time, when Odin first made the world, there were joy and gladness not only in Asgard but over all the earth; sin and evil were unknown, and death had not yet come even among men. So the gods were very happy, —all except Loki, who looked on with jealous eyes at the gladness which he could not share; for he knew no pleasure save in devising mischief. Not satisfied with grudging others their happiness, 10 he sought some means to bring about trouble, but finding himself too powerless to accomplish anything alone, he married a fierce giantess and had three terrible children,—Hel, the Midgard serpent, and the Fenris wolf. These dreadful creatures soon grew very strong and fearful to look upon, and they threatened the comfort and at times the lives of everything on the earth, even of the gods themselves. So one day Odin rose up from his throne

stern and wrathful, and cast Hel down into the center of the earth, to rule over the dark region of the dead. Then he threw the Midgard serpent into the bottom of the sea, where he grew larger and larger, until his huge body encircled the whole earth. But before he could banish the Fenris wolf, Loki came forward and begged that he might be spared and allowed to remain, promising the gods that he should do no harm. And Odin consented, though with doubt and distrust. 10

After a while the wolf became very large and fierce, and nothing seemed to appease his savage hunger. Only the sword god dared feed him, and he wandered about Asgard growing daily more hungry, and more cruel and terrible to see. At length Odin called the gods together in council and said to them:—

“This child of Loki’s is getting to be more of a menace to our lives every day, and I no longer trust Loki’s promise to guard our safety. We 20 must therefore find some way to control him, for we cannot kill him and so stain our shining city with his blood.”

Then Thor proposed that they should bind the wolf with a strong chain which he himself would make, and to this plan the gods gladly agreed. So all that night and for many days to come, the sound of Thor's hammer could be heard throughout Asgard as he forged the links of a massive chain that should bind the Fenris wolf. When it was finished, the gods assembled before Odin, Thor carrying the heavy chain upon his shoulders, 10 and Loki coming up boldly with the Fenris wolf beside him. No force could possibly be used with a creature so strong and fierce, so the gods sought to gain their end by flattery, praising the wolf's size and strength, and daring him to match it against the strength of the chain which Thor had made. Now Fenrir knew far better than they how terribly strong he had become, and therefore he willingly lay down and let them fasten the chain around his great body, and then 20 secure it to a rock. When this was done the gods breathed more freely, for it seemed as if nothing should be feared from the wolf now; but in a moment he rose, stretched his huge limbs, and

shook himself once. As he did so the chain fell to pieces as easily as if it were made of silk. The gods looked on in wonder and dismay, and the wolf walked off with a low, threatening growl. Even Odin was silent with fear, for it had been revealed to him in the runes that in the final overthrow of Asgard the Fenris wolf should bear a part.

Thor now came forward and begged permission to try again at making another chain much larger ¹⁰ and stronger than the last. The forging of this second chain took many days and nights, for Thor tested every link to see that it was strong and sure. At last it was finished, and brought on the shoulders of the strongest men to the foot of Odin's throne. Fenrer was again summoned, but when he saw the chain he refused to be bound. No flattery or coaxing could move him, so the gods began to taunt him, laughing at his boasted strength, and accusing him of cowardice. Ap- ²⁰ parently with great reluctance the wolf again allowed himself to be bound, and when the chain was secured about his shaggy body and fas-

tened tightly to the ground, the gods looked on in fear and yet in joy, for surely nothing could be stronger than the massive chain which was wound round and round the prostrate wolf. But Fenrer rose slowly, stretched himself, and gave one bound into the air, while the gods drew back in dismay before the rattling shower of broken links.

Then Odin saw that no brass or steel or any
10 metal could withstand the terrible strength of the wolf, and he bade Thor give up all further attempts to forge a chain, while he had it proclaimed throughout Asgard that Fenrer was to roam wherever he would. Shortly after this he sent Loki on a journey far across the seas, to a country so distant from Asgard that he would have to be gone many days. Though usually alert and suspicious, Loki set off on his errand, not dreaming that Odin had some purpose in sending him away. As soon as he was
20 gone, Odin dispatched Hermod with all speed to the home of the swarthy elves, and bade him procure from them an enchanted chain, such as they alone knew how to make. Hermod set out at once, and

found his journey a safer and pleasanter one than the visit to Helheim, for though the home of the dwarfs was underground, the road was easier to find, and once at the foot of the mountain he followed the stream to its rocky source, and the rest of the journey was quickly made.

When he delivered his message to the swarthy elves, they set immediately to work, and for nine days and nights Hermod heard no sound in the workshop as the little men plied their task. No stroke of hammer or noise of anvil was necessary in the making of this wonderful chain, for into its weaving went the strangest things that Hermod had ever seen, — the down from a butterfly's wing, a handful of moonbeams, the lace of a spider's web, a humming bird's lance, the breath of the night wind, and many other queer and mysterious things. The work was all done in perfect silence, and Hermod sat by, looking on in wonder as the magic chain grew into being under the elves' skillful fingers. At last it was finished, and with the precious gift in his hands, Hermod hastened back to Asgard. Then Odin called the gods together,

and summoned Fenrer to come and try his strength a third time. When the wolf saw the chain which was to bind him, he became at once suspicious, especially when he found that Loki was absent. He had no fear of his power to break brass and steel, but he scented a possible danger in the soft fine thread which lay in Odin's hand. As he had no one here to warn him if the gods meant mischief, he felt that it was safer to wait until Loki
10 was present; so he drew away, growling and showing his teeth. At this Thor cried out: —

“How now, Fenrer, have you used up all your strength in breaking those heavy chains, and have not enough left to snap this slender thread?”

This taunt made the wolf growl more fiercely than ever, though he consented a third time to be bound, demanding first, however, that one of the gods should put his hand in the huge mouth, and leave it there as a pledge that no magic arts
20 were being used against him. None of the gods wished to take such a risk, and they all drew back in dismay except Tyr, the sword god, who stepped boldly forward and thrust his hand into the wolf's

mouth. Then Fenrer submitted to be bound, and allowed the gods to wind the slender thread all about him, and fasten the end to a rock. The moment it was secured, the wolf tried as before to shake himself free, but the more he struggled and strained the tighter drew the magic thread, until at last Fenrer lay bound and helpless, and foaming madly with rage. Seeing that he had been tricked, he closed his teeth savagely upon Tyr's fingers, and bit off his whole hand. But the sword god ¹⁰ felt repaid for the loss of his hand since the wolf at last was bound. Thus the gods left him, securely chained to the rock; and there he lay until the final terrible day when it was decreed that he should break loose again, and bring destruction upon all the dwellers of Asgard.

ANDVARI'S HOARD

ONCE upon a time, Odin and Hœnir and Loki went on a visit to the earth, and in order to mingle among men without being recognized as gods, they laid aside all their divine powers and became, even in appearance, like ordinary men. When they had wandered about the earth many days, and talked with many people, — who never knew, of course, that the gods were among them — they grew tired of the busy life of the world, and longed to find some place of quiet and rest. So they went far into the heart of the forest, and sat down beside a brook where many fish were leaping about and darting through the sparkling water. The gods lay idly upon the grass and watched them for a long time. Presently, they spied an otter sitting on the bank of the stream, lazily eating a fish which he had just caught. The gods looked on at the

meal, and it made them remember that they too were hungry. Odin therefore proposed that they journey on in search of food, and to this the others readily consented; but as they rose to go, Loki suddenly took up a large stone, and throwing it at the otter, killed him instantly. At this wanton cruelty Odin became angry, and rebuked Loki for his act; but Loki only laughed, while he skinned the otter and cast its body back into the stream.

The gods then wandered on until almost night-¹⁰ fall before they came to any dwelling, and this was only a rude hut built on the side of a mountain. But they were too weary to look further, so they stopped and begged food and a lodging for the night. The old man who lived in the hut bade them enter and share his simple fare, and in return he asked them to tell him of their adventures. Without revealing their identity, Odin told him of their wanderings among men, and of many strange things they had seen. Hœnir also²⁰ related stories of distant heroes, and of brave deeds on bloody battlefields. But when it came Loki's turn he only laughed and threw upon the

ground his otter's skin. When the old man saw this he cried out: —

“O wicked, cruel man, you have killed my son. He was fishing to-day in the stream, and at this sport he always takes the form of an otter. Alas, this is indeed he, and you have slain him.”

Then he raised a loud cry, and called for help to his two sons, Fafnir and Regin, who came running in from the woods near by. As soon as they
10 heard of the killing of their brother, they seized the three gods and bound them hand and foot, for in becoming men the gods had lost all their divine powers, and they had no choice but to yield.

When Odin begged the old man to ask what he would in payment for their ransom, both Fafnir and Regin demanded the life of one of the gods in return for their brother's. But their father spread the otter's skin upon the ground, and turning to Odin said: —

20 “You and your wicked companions shall be free when you have covered every hair of this hide with a piece of gold or a precious stone.”

“We will do this,” answered Odin; “but first

you must set one of us free that he may go and procure the treasure. Let the other two stay bound until he returns."

To this the old man and his sons agreed, and Odin bade them unbind Loki, for he alone would know where to find such vast treasure as they needed. Accordingly Loki was freed, and promising his companions to return with their ransom, he hurried away. There was only one place where a hoard of gold and precious stones might be found,¹⁰ and thither Loki directed his steps. There were many mountains to climb and rivers to cross before he reached the place he sought, and night coming on made the journey more difficult and wearisome. But at last, upon a rocky mountain side he spied the thing he had come so far to find, a small, deep cavern in the rocks. As Loki drew nearer, the moonlight revealed a little brook gushing from the mouth of the cavern and winding in and out among the rocks below. It was small,²⁰ but beautifully clear, and the pebbles in its bed shone in the moonlight like diamonds. Just where it issued from the cave, the water flowed

swiftly over a deep pool, and here it was so dark that only the sharp eyes of Loki could have caught the faint shimmer of a salmon which lay lurking in its depths. But Loki saw it, and his heart leaped for joy, for this salmon was no other than the cunning dwarf Andvari, the owner of a wonderful hoard of gold and gems. This treasure was buried somewhere near the cavern, and it was this that Loki had come so far to gain. So he now put forth all his skill to catch the wily salmon as he darted to and fro in the stream. The dwarf knew, however, who the fisherman was, and why he had come, and he had no intention of being caught and made to yield up his treasures. Many hours Loki spent trying to lure the salmon into the shallows, but all his efforts were in vain. The crafty fish never moved from his deep, dark pool. Then Loki saw that further attempts would be useless unless he had help from some one with magic skill, so he determined to seek the aid of Queen Ran and her wonderful net.

He left the cave and hurried down to the sea, and for many hours he walked along the shore,

searching carefully among the rocks for the hiding place of the cruel ocean queen. Somewhere here, or upon the jagged reefs, he would be sure to find her spreading the net for her prey. But though he wandered for miles along the water's edge, he caught no glimpse of her anywhere, and wearied and disheartened, he was about to give up his search, when he heard a low, rippling laugh just behind him, and turning he saw the beautiful daughters of the sea king seated on the rocks ¹⁰ combing their golden hair. Loki went over to them and begged them to tell him where he could find their mother, Queen Ran.

"Why do you seek her?" one of the maidens asked.

"Because I am a fisherman, and would know of her where the big fish are gathering now," replied Loki.

Then the sea maidens laughed again and said: —

"O crafty, cunning Loki, do not think to deceive us who know well who you are, and why you have come hither. Play no tricks, then, and

tell no lies to our mother, or you will not gain the object of your journey."

Loki promised, and begged the nymphs to tell him where to find Queen Ran, since no other than Odin himself needed her help.

"You must go about ten miles further," answered one of the maidens, "until you come to a place where the rocks are high, and project in sharp, dangerous reefs far out into the sea. Here
10 the waves dash with tremendous fury, and here is many a good ship wrecked with all her cargo on board. Look among the shadows of the rocks, and you will find our mother sitting there mending her net."

Loki thanked the nymphs and hurried on, for the night was growing black and the moon was completely hidden, and he had yet far to go. When he felt sure that ten miles lay between him and the daughters of the sea, he stopped and
20 looked carefully about him. Near by was a group of tall, jagged rocks over which the waves dashed with great fury; but there was one spot so protected that even the spray from the water did not

reach it, and here Loki spied Queen Ran, long-fingered, greedy, and cruel, mending her magic net. When she saw Loki, she tried to hide in the shadow of the rocks, for she knew him and feared he had come with some unfriendly message from Odin. But Loki called to her and said : —

“Be not afraid, O queen, for I come as a petitioner to beg a great boon of thee,” and Ran replied, “What does Loki wish, that he leaves the shining halls of Asgard to travel over the earth ¹⁰ to our gloomy land?”

“I have journeyed thus far,” answered Loki, “because I have heard of your wonderful net which will catch whatever you wish, and that anything once caught cannot escape from its magic meshes. And therefore I have come to ask your help, for there is a certain salmon which I have long tried to snare, but which is too cunning to be caught by ordinary means. Lend me, therefore, your magic net.” 20

“I cannot! I cannot!” cried Ran, “there is a ship sailing hither which will reach these rocks in the morning, and it is full of great treasure—

jewels, and gold, and rich apparel. I have sent my mermaids to lure it to the reefs, where it will be dashed to pieces, and the prize be gathered into my net. No, I cannot lend it to you."

"But let me have it for just one hour," pleaded Loki, "and I will promise to return it in that time. I swear it on the word of a god."

The oath was reassuring, but still Ran hesitated to let the precious net leave her hands. At length, however, she was persuaded, and with many expressions of gratitude, Loki said good-by and hastened back to the cave of Andvari, for the night was now far spent, and at daylight the salmon would leave his haunts.

When he reached the cavern, the fish was still lying idly in the water, but upon seeing the net in Loki's hand it darted like a flash down the stream. Then Loki quickly cast his net, and though the cunning fish swam with wonderful swiftness, it could not escape the magic net which began to close slowly and surely about it. When Loki thought that his prize was secure, he drew the net on land, and, after slowly loosening the meshes,

he at last grasped the struggling fish in his hand. Now, however, it was no longer a salmon fighting for its freedom, but the crafty dwarf Andvari. Any one less wise than Loki would have dropped him immediately in surprise at the transformation, but Loki only held on the tighter, and shook the poor dwarf until he cried for mercy.

“No mercy will I grant thee, thou master thief,” exclaimed the god, “until thou hast revealed to me the hiding place of thy ill-gotten treasures. ¹⁰ Show me where it lies, or I will dash thee to pieces upon these rocks.”

Seeing that there was no hope of escape, Andvari promised to yield up his hoard, and pointing to a large rock near by bade Loki raise it and look beneath. Without loosening his hold of the dwarf, Loki tried to lift the stone, but though it was far from being heavy or beyond his strength, he found that he could not move it. Then he knew that he was being tricked, and grasping the dwarf still ²⁰ tighter, he shook him fiercely and demanded his help. Andvari laid his finger on the stone and immediately it turned over and disclosed a large

pit beneath. Though it was quite dark now and the moon completely hidden, yet in the dim light Loki saw the sparkle of thousands of precious gems and the shimmer of many dazzling heaps of gold. It was truly a wonderful sight, and would have bewildered the ordinary finder of such wealth. But Loki had no time to spend in admiration. He gathered all the treasure together in the net, which, by its magic power, grew larger and larger as he continued to fill it.

The dwarf meanwhile stood by sullen and angry, watching the gold and gems being poured into the net. Had it been Odin who was robbing him of his hoard he would have begged that some small portion of it might be left him, but he knew better than to make such a request of Loki; so when the last of the treasure had been gathered up, he turned away and was disappearing into the woods when Loki caught the glitter of something upon his finger, and seizing him roughly, cried out: "Ho, ho, my cunning elf. So you would keep back some of the gems, I see. Yield me that ring upon your finger, or you shall not have one moment more to live."

Andvari's face grew black with rage, and he refused to give up his ring, stamping his foot all the while upon the ground and cursing Loki for his avarice and greed. Yet he knew too well that his fury was in vain, and soon he changed his tone, begging Loki, humbly, to leave him his one poor gem. This appeal would have moved any other of the gods, but Loki was never known to do a generous thing in all his life. He only gave a mocking, hateful laugh, and seizing the dwarf, tore the ¹⁰ ring from his finger. It was a wonderful ring, shaped like a serpent, coiled, with its tail in its mouth. It had two blood-red rubies for eyes, and in the dim light they seemed to Loki to glow with all the cunning and cruelty of a living serpent. But this did not deter him from slipping the ring on his finger, and laughing triumphantly at the dwarf, who was now foaming with helpless rage. Then Andvari cursed the ring and said: "May this ring be your bane, and the bane of all who shall ²⁰ possess it. May it bring sorrow and evil upon him who shall wear it, and from this day be the source of envy and hatred and bloodshed."

To these dreadful words Loki paid no heed, and throwing his precious burden upon his shoulder, he hurried down the mountain side and sped swiftly on to the old man's cottage. Odin and Hœnir were still bound, and they had almost given up hope of Loki's return. But they forgot the tediousness of their captivity when they saw the great heap of gold and gems which Loki poured out of the net ; for here was surely more than enough to cover ten
10 otters' skins, and the remainder of the treasure would be their own. Fafnir and Regin stretched the skin upon the ground, and bade Loki cover every hair. This seemed at first an easy thing to do ; but the more gold and precious stones that Loki spread upon it, the larger the skin seemed to grow, until it covered the entire floor of the hut ; and though Loki still added handfuls of gold, the brothers always found some spot uncovered. At last every hair of the
20 hide was completely hidden beneath some coin or gem, and the gods demanded their release. The old man unloosed the cords which bound them and was bidding them depart, when Regin uttered a loud cry and declared that there was one hair

yet uncovered upon the otter's head. Odin and Hœnir looked at each other in dismay, for the net was now empty, and there was no way to procure further treasure. Meanwhile, the old man and his sons were clamoring loudly for the gods to fulfill their promise. The case seemed indeed desperate; until Loki drew from his finger the serpent ring of Andvari, and laid it upon the hair. The brothers then declared themselves satisfied, and the gods left the hut with all speed; Odin¹⁰ and Hœnir returning sadly to Asgard, while Loki took back the net to the anxiously waiting Queen Ran, and reached there just as the dawn was breaking.

But the treasure stayed with the old man and his sons and became, according to Andvari's words, a source of hatred and bloodshed; for the father, wishing to keep all the wealth for himself, drove his sons from the house, and shut himself up with his treasure. All day long he sat poring greedily over²⁰ the heaps of glittering gems, and running his fingers through the shining gold. Above all, he loved to watch the serpent ring, with its glowing ruby

eyes. Then one night Fafnir came suddenly upon him, and demanded his share of the gold, and when the old man refused to yield up even one stone, Fafnir slew him in his anger, and took possession of all the treasure. And being fearful that his brother might steal upon him some time and rob, or perchance kill him, he changed himself into a monstrous dragon which breathed forth fire and spat deadly poison. Thus secured, he coiled to himself about the hoard, and no one dared to approach him. Regin meanwhile fled to a neighboring city, and became the king's master smith, the maker of strong swords.

REGIN'S PUPIL

So Regin became a master smith, and made many wonderful swords and spears for the king to use in battle. He also worked in gold and silver, and became so skillful at his craft that his fame spread throughout the country, and the king valued him above all his other workmen. But as time went on, Regin became known not only for his skill as a master smith, but also for his great wisdom as a teacher. Men came from all around to consult him, and his knowledge was ¹⁰ deemed far greater than that of all the wise men in the kingdom. The king himself often sought him in counsel, and when his young son, Prince Siegfried, came to manhood, he was sent to Regin's smithy to learn the master's trade and to grow in wisdom.

At first Siegfried did not like to wear the woolen coat and heavy leather apron of a smith, but he

soon grew accustomed to that, and to the plain fare which he shared with Regin. He was a very willing pupil too,—eager to learn and quick to follow instruction. Early in the morning the sound of Siegfried's hammer could be heard as he worked merrily at his trade, and he almost forgot that rough clothes and simple living were not things he had always been used to.

One day Regin came to Siegfried as he stood at work, and told him of a famous man named Amilias, who had a suit of armor that no sword could even dent. This Amilias boasted that no smithy in the country could produce a sword that could vie in strength with his wonderful armor. All the smiths and armorers in the country had tried in vain to dent or shatter the shield of Amilias with their finest blades, but no weapon had yet been made which did not break at the first blow.

“I myself cannot enter this contest,” said Regin, “for I am now too old, and besides, I have lost something of my former skill at sword making; but you are young, and clever at your trade, and might therefore try. Will you do so?”

"Yes, yes; let me try," exclaimed Siegfried, eagerly, "for my arm has grown so strong and the blows of my hammer so sure, that I feel certain of being able to forge a sword that will bring this boaster to shame."

So Regin selected for the youth his very finest steel, and Siegfried set quickly to work. For seven days and nights he never left his forge, tempering and testing his steel, and throwing aside all that was not perfect. At last a sword ¹⁰ was finished which seemed to be of the right quality. Regin praised it highly, and said he had never seen a finer edge.

But Siegfried only said, "Let us prove it," and he took the sword and smote with all his strength upon the anvil. The blade shivered into a dozen pieces.

Nothing disheartened, Siegfried set to work again, and spent many days and nights at his forge, often forgetting to eat or sleep in his eagerness to finish his task. When at last the steel had ²⁰ been finely tempered, and seemed of perfect workmanship, he called to Regin and bade him try its strength.

“Nay, let us not dull the edge,” replied the master, “there is no need to put it to the test, for I can see that it is true and strong.”

But Siegfried took the sword and smote again upon the anvil; this time the blade was blunted, though it did not break in pieces. Then Regin besought him to try no longer, but the youth, grim and determined, returned to his forge, and made ready his tools for another effort.

10 That night he paused many times in his work, and often felt so discouraged that he was tempted to give up the task; but each time he became ashamed of his weakness, and bravely set to work again. Once when he sat down by his fire to rest, he was conscious of some one's being in the room, but thinking it was Regin who had come to inspect his work, he did not look up to see. At length, however, the silence grew uncomfortable, and Siegfried turned around. Close beside him was
20 standing a tall man wrapped in a dark blue mantle. His beard and hair were very long and very white, and by the dim light of the fire Siegfried noticed that he had only one eye. His face was

kindly, and his whole presence had an air both gentle and reassuring, yet something about him filled the youth with a strange awe. He waited for the stranger to speak, but no word came, and Siegfried began to tremble with nervous fear. At this the old man smiled, and handed him the pieces of a broken sword. Siegfried took them in wonder, but before he could frame a question he found himself suddenly alone; the stranger had disappeared.

10

The next morning Siegfried hastened to Regin and told him of his strange visitor. Regin thought at first that the lad had been dreaming, but when he saw the pieces of broken sword he cried out joyfully:—

“Fortune now be with you, Siegfried; for it was no other than Odin who visited you, and these pieces are of the famous sword Gram, which in former days Odin gave to your father, and afterwards took from him in battle. Sit down and I²⁰ will tell you the story.”

Siegfried sat down and Regin began: “Many, many years ago, when King Volsung ruled over

all this country, he built a beautiful palace, and in the center of it, in a large open courtyard, grew a wonderful tree, whose branches spread out so broad and heavy that they made a roof over the whole palace. One day King Volsung gave a great feast to all his people, and the knights and ladies assembled in the courtyard, to walk under the great tree and rest beneath the shadow of its spreading boughs. When the feasting and merriment were
10 at their highest, there suddenly appeared in the midst of the revellers a tall old man. He had a blue cloak thrown over his shoulders, and his beard was long and white. Only a few of the guests saw his face, but those who did, affirmed that he had only one eye. Stepping quickly up to King Volsung's wonderful tree, he drew from beneath his cloak a glittering sword, and drove it with great force into the tree trunk, up to the very hilt. Then, turning to the astonished com-
20 pany, he said: 'I have put here a sword, the like of which was never seen before on the earth, nor ever will be again. If any among you can draw it forth from the tree, he shall have it as a gift

from Odin.' So saying, he disappeared. One by one the guests of King Volsung tried their strength in drawing out the sword, but all their efforts were in vain; it was more than a match for the stoutest arm, and each warrior returned to his place defeated, angry, and ashamed.

"When all had tried and failed, some one told the king to call his youngest son, Siegmund, a lad who had as yet done scarcely more than toss a ball. At first reluctant, the king at length consented, and bade the servants summon young Siegmund into his father's presence. The lad came at once, and the king told him what to do. Of course every one expected to see your father fail more hopelessly than the rest; but he stepped up boldly, and to the astonishment of all beholders, laid his hand on the hilt of the sword and drew it forth as easily as from a scabbard. Thus did the famous sword Gram come into your father's hands."

20

Regin had finished his story, but Siegfried asked eagerly, "Then why did Odin take it from him again?"

“It is not known why he did so,” replied Regin, “and let us not inquire too closely into the actions of the gods. Be glad rather that the great Allfather deemed thee worthy to possess even its broken pieces.”

Proud and happy, and sure at last of success, Siegfried took the pieces of the famous Gram, and welded them together into a mighty sword, the strongest that had ever come from the hand of 10 man. And he called the sword Balmung. Then he bade Regin come and see him test the power and mettle of the new blade. A third time he smote upon the anvil with all his strength, but now no shattered steel fell at his feet; the sword had cut the anvil in two as easily as if it had been a feather. So Siegfried was satisfied.

A few days later he and Regin journeyed to the country of Amilias, and challenged him to put on his boasted armor, and try its strength against 20 that of Siegfried's sword. A day was set for the contest, and the people of both kingdoms came to witness it. Amilias stood up, encased in his suit of shining armor, on which could be seen no scar

nor dint of sword. Then he called mockingly to Siegfried:—

“Come hither, youth, and try your child’s toy upon this helmet.” And Siegfried came, pale with anger at the insult, but outwardly very calm. He stood before Amilias, and seemed for a moment to hesitate, then he swung Balmung three times around his head, and brought it down with terrible force upon the helmet of his foe. To all appearances nothing had happened, for Amilias remained unmoved, and apparently unhurt.

“Shake him,” cried Siegfried; and when this was done he fell apart, cut completely in two by the keen edge of Balmung.

THE SLAYING OF FAFNIR

ONE day Regin said to Siegfried: "There is no longer any need for you to stay here and learn to forge weapons, for you have now made the strongest sword in the world, and there is nothing further for you to learn here. And of my celebrated wisdom you have already gained all there is of worth. Leave me, therefore, and go out into the world to seek adventures that will add to the glory and fame you have just won by your victory over
10 Amilias."

"But I do not know where to go," replied Siegfried; "and besides, I have no horse, and should make a sorry appearance if I went afoot."

"Go out into yonder meadow," said Regin, "and there you will find all the steeds which belong to your father's house. Choose yourself one from among these; they are all of noble race."

Siegfried went over to the meadow where the stately horses were grazing, and saw that each one of them was truly beautiful enough to be the charger of a king's son. Indeed, they all seemed to him so desirable that there was none which he would prefer above another. While he was hesitating, he heard a voice at his side ask, "Would you choose a steed, Sir Siegfried?"

Siegfried turned quickly around, for he had not heard any one approaching, and his heart beat fast ¹⁰ when he saw beside him a tall form wrapped in a blue mantle. He dared not look closer, and he trembled now with both fear and joy, for the form and voice were strangely familiar. Then falteringly he answered:—

"I would indeed choose, but all the horses seem to me to be of equal beauty and strength."

The stranger shook his head and said: "There is one horse here which far surpasses all the rest, for he came from Odin's pastures on the sunny slopes ²⁰ of Asgard. He it is you must choose."

"Gladly would I do so," replied Siegfried, "but I am too blind and stupid to see which he is."

“Drive all the horses into the river,” said the old man, “and I think you will then find the choice easy.”

So Siegfried drove them out of the meadow, and down a steep bank into the stream below. They all plunged in boldly, but soon began to struggle frantically against the current which was bearing them rapidly down the river upon a bank of rocks below. Some of the horses turned back when 10 they felt the force of the water; some fought helplessly against it and were carried down toward the rocks; but one swam to the other side and sprang up on the green bank. Here he stopped a moment to graze, then he plunged again into the stream, and, breasting the current with apparent ease, he swam to the shore and stood again at Siegfried's side.

The youth stroked the stately head and looked into the large, beautiful eyes. Then turning to 20 the stranger he said, “This is he.”

“Yes,” replied the old man, “this is he, and a better steed did man never have. His name is Greyfel, and he is yours as a gift from Odin.”

So saying he disappeared, and Siegfried returned to his forge full of joy and pride, for he knew that no other than the Father of the gods himself had come to direct his choice.

When Regin heard of this second visit of Odin's he said to Siegfried: "You are truly blest and favored of the gods, and it may be that you are the one chosen to perform a task at which many a brave man has quailed, and many a hero lost his life." Then he told Siegfried of Andvari's hoard,¹⁰ and of how it came to be guarded by the dragon Fafnir. "This monster," he continued, "does not rest satisfied with the possession of his treasure, but must needs live upon the flesh of men; and he has thus become the terror of all the country round. Many brave men have sought to slay him, but have only miserably perished; for the dragon breathes out fire which will consume ten men at a breath; and he spits forth poison so deadly that one drop of it can kill. He is, as I have told²⁰ you, my brother, but nevertheless I bid you slay him."

"I will go," cried Siegfried, eagerly; "for though

the monster be all which you have said, with Greyfel and my trusty Balmung I fear neither man nor beast."

The following day Siegfried bade farewell to his parents and started on his journey, taking Regin with him, since the latter knew the road so well and could guide him to the dragon's cave. They traveled for many days and nights, and at last came to a narrow river whose current was so fierce that no boat, Regin said, was ever known to brave its waters. But neither Siegfried nor Greyfel felt a touch of fear, and the noble horse carried both riders safely to the opposite bank. Here they found themselves at the foot of a tall mountain, which seemed to rise straight up like a wall from the river's edge. It was apparently of solid rock, for no tree or shrub or blade of grass grew upon its steep side. There were no sounds of birds in the air, no sign of any living thing inhabiting this dreary place; nothing to see but the rushing river over which the mountain cast its gloomy shadow. It was enough to dishearten the stoutest hero, but Siegfried refused to turn back, though

Regin, now trembling and fearful, besought him to give up the adventure.

They went on some distance farther along the river bank, to a place where the mountain appeared less rocky and forbidding. There were patches of earth to be seen here and there, and occasionally a straggling tree sought to strike its roots into the unfriendly soil. Pointing up through the trees Regin said excitedly: —

“Look close and you will see what seems to be ¹⁰ a path worn in the earth. It reaches from the mountain top down to the water’s edge, and it is the trail of the dragon. Over this he will come to-morrow at sunrise, but think not to encounter him face to face, for you could not do it and live. You must first try stratagem if you would hope to slay him. Dig therefore a series of pits and cover them with boughs, so that the dragon, as he rushes down the mountain side, may fall into one of them and not get out until you have slain him. As for ²⁰ me, I will go some distance below, where the view of Fafnir’s cave is plainer, and I can warn you of his approach.” So saying, he went away, and

Siegfried remained alone, wondering at Regin's cowardice, but content to face the danger with only the help of Balmung.

It was now night, and the place became full of unknown terrors. Even the stars and the moon were hidden by thick clouds, and Siegfried could hardly see to dig his pits. Every time he struck the earth the blow brought a deep echo from the mountain, and now and then he heard the dismal hoot of an owl. There was no other sound save the noise of the swiftly running river, and his own heavy breathing as he worked away at his task.

Suddenly he was aware that some one was standing beside him, and when he turned to look, his heart beat fast with joy, for even in the darkness he fancied he saw the blueness of the stranger's coat, and his long white beard beneath the hood.

"What are you doing in this dismal country, Sir Siegfried?" asked the old man.

20 "I have come to slay Fafnir," replied the youth.

"Have you no fear, then?" continued the stranger, "or no love for your life that you risk it thus boldly? Many a brave man has met death

ere this in the perilous encounter you would try. You are young yet, and life is full of pleasures. Give up this adventure then, and return to your father's hall."

"No, I cannot," answered Siegfried. "I am young, it is true, but I have no fear of the dragon, since Odin's sword is in my hands."

"It is well said," replied the old man; "but if you are to accomplish the slaying of Fafnir, do not dig any pits here on the river's bank, for it will be ¹⁰ of no avail. But go up on the mountain side until you have found a narrow path worn deep into the earth. It is Fafnir's trail, and over it he is sure to come. Dig there a deep pit, and hide in it yourself, first covering the top with a few boughs. As the dragon's huge body passes over this, you can strike him from beneath with your sword."

As the stranger finished speaking, Siegfried turned to thank him, but he saw no one there; only Greyfel was standing at his side. But his ²⁰ courage now rose high, for he knew that it was Odin who had talked with him. He hurried up the mountain side and soon found the dragon's

trail. Here he dug a deep pit and crept into it himself, covering the top as Odin had directed. For hours he lay still and waited, and it seemed to him that the night would never end. At last a faint streak of light appeared in the east, and it soon grew bright enough for Siegfried to see plainly about him. He raised one corner of his roof of boughs and peeped cautiously out. Just then there came a terrible roar which seemed to shake the whole mountain. This was followed in a moment by a loud rushing sound like some mighty wind, and the air was full of heat and smoke as from a furnace. Siegfried dropped quickly back into his hiding place, for he knew that the dragon had left his cave. Louder and louder grew the fearful sound, as the monster rushed swiftly down the mountain side, leaving smoke and fire in his trail. His claws struck deep into the ground, and in his rapid descent he sometimes tore up the roots of trees. His huge wings flapping at his side made a frightful noise, while the black scaly tail left behind it a track of deadly slime. On he went until, all unknowing, he

glided over the loosely strewn boughs which covered the pit, and Siegfried struck with his good sword Balmung. It seemed to him that he had struck blindly. Yet in a moment he knew the blow was sure and had pierced the monster's heart for he heard it give one roar of mortal pain. Then as he drew out his sword, the huge body quivered a moment and rolled with a crash down the mountain side. But in drawing out his sword from the dragon's heart, a great gush of blood followed which bathed Siegfried from head to foot in its crimson stream. He did not heed this, however, but sprang out of the pit and hurried down to the spot where the dragon, so lately a thing of dread and horror, now lay lifeless at the foot of the mountain. To his surprise he found Regin already there, leaning over the dead creature and peering closely, to be sure that it was really slain and no longer to be feared.

When Siegfried came toward him he cried "Bravely done, Siegfried! You have this day wrought a great deed which shall ever be told and sung when men speak of the feats of heroes!"

Then he added eagerly, "Have you found the hoard?"

"I did not look for it," answered Siegfried; "for after what you have told me of the curse which rests upon it, I had no desire to touch it."

Regin seemed now to be trembling with excitement, and he exclaimed hurriedly: "We must seek it at once, yes, at once, before any one can
10 come to claim it and we thereby lose a wonderful treasure. But let me go alone to find it, for you would surely lose your way. And while I am gone, do you cut out Fafnir's heart and roast it, and I will eat it upon my return."

While he was speaking, Regin's face had lost its usual gentle and kindly look, and had become crafty and sly and full of cruel cunning. He looked now and then suspiciously at Siegfried, but the youth turned his head away, for he could not
20 bear to look on at such a dreadful transformation. Meanwhile Regin was muttering to himself: "The gold! the gold! and precious gems in great glittering heaps. All of Andvari's hoard is mine now,

—all mine.” And he hurried away, leaving Siegfried surprised and sorrowing to find how soon the curse of that ill-fated gold had fallen on its would-be possessor.

When Regin had gone, Siegfried set to work to roast Fafnir’s heart, and when the dreadful meal was cooked, he laid it upon the grass, but in so doing, some of the blood dropped upon his hand. Wondering what taste there could be in the dragon’s heart to make Regin desire to eat it,¹⁰ Siegfried put the finger, on which the blood had dropped, to his lips. All at once he heard a hum of voices in the air. It was only a flock of crows flying overhead and chattering to themselves, but it sounded like human voices, and Siegfried could plainly tell what the crows were saying. A moment later two ravens came flying by, and he heard one of them say, “There sits Siegfried roasting Fafnir’s heart that he may give it to Regin who will taste the blood, and so be able²⁰ to understand the language of birds.”

“Yes,” replied the other raven, “and he is waiting for Regin to return, not knowing that

when Regin has taken possession of the hoard, he will come back and slay Siegfried."

The youth listened to these words in sorrow and surprise, for in spite of the look which he had seen on Regin's face, he could not believe his master guilty of such murderous thoughts.

Soon Regin returned, but what a change had come over him. Siegfried saw that the raven's words were indeed true, and that the curse of
10 Andvari had fallen upon the new possessor of the hoard. If Regin's face had been mean and crafty before, it was now ten times more dreadful, and his mouth wore an evil smile which made Siegfried shudder. It seemed, too, as if his body had shrunk, and its motion was not unlike the gliding of a serpent. He was talking to himself as he came along, and appeared to be counting busily on his fingers. When Siegfried spoke, he looked up and eyed him furtively, then his face became suddenly
20 black with rage, and he sprang at the youth, crying: "Fool and murderer, you shall have none of the gold. It is mine, all mine." With the strength of a madman he dashed Siegfried upon

the ground, and seizing a large stick struck him with all his force. But Siegfried sprang quickly from the ground, and drawing Balmung, prepared to defend himself against Regin's attack. Enraged now to the point of frenzy, Regin struck again and again, and suddenly in his blind fury, rushed upon Siegfried's sword. Siegfried uttered a cry of horror and closed his eyes, for he could not look upon the painful sight. When he opened them again, Regin was lying dead at his feet. ¹⁰ Then he drew out his sword, and sitting down beside his slain friend, wept bitterly. At length he arose, and mounting Greyfel rode sorrowfully away, leaving the hoard to whoever might wish to possess it and brave the horrors of its curse.

THE VALKYRIE

FOR many days Siegfried traveled on, saddened and discouraged, and having no heart for further adventures, since his first one had ended so sadly. He felt that he cared but little what became of him, and letting the reins lie loose on Greyfel's neck, he allowed the horse to carry him whithersoever it would. At night he rested under the shade of the forest trees, and by day he wandered aimlessly over the country, too disheartened even
10 to wish to return home again. But although he cared not to guide Greyfel, the horse was being led by a hand far wiser than his own, for Odin had other tasks in store for Siegfried, and it was he who now directed the young hero's path.

One day at nightfall they came to the foot of a mountain, and Greyfel stopped, as if waiting for his master to dismount. But Siegfried did not wish to rest here, and urged his horse forward.

For the first time Greyfel refused to obey, and Siegfried, wondering at his stubbornness, but too tired and indifferent to force him further, dismounted and prepared to remain here for the night. Something about the place, its loneliness and silence, recalled the other mountain side, where his great sorrow had come to him. He could not sleep, so he wandered about among the trees, now and then stopping to listen as some sound broke the stillness of the night. Once when¹⁰ he was looking toward the mountain top, he fancied he caught the glimmer of a light somewhere among the trees; and as he watched it longer, he saw what appeared to be tongues of flame leaping up and then disappearing. Alert now and eager to get nearer this strange sight, he mounted Greyfel and directed him toward the fire, which, when he drew nearer, he found was no common fire, but a circle of flames enclosing a large rock. There was no path up the mountain,²⁰ and Siegfried felt uncertain whether to proceed. The horse, however, did not hesitate, but began the ascent boldly, picking his way among the trees

and over the fallen trunks; sometimes stumbling and sometimes bruising his legs, but never once faltering or showing a desire to turn back.

Suddenly Siegfried felt upon his face a scorching wind and smoke that blinded his eyes. A quick turn of Greyfel's had brought them almost upon a wall of fierce leaping flames, which rose so high that Siegfried could see nothing beyond them. The intense heat burned his face, and he
10 dared not open his eyes to look about him. Greyfel snorted and pawed the ground, then suddenly made a movement forward, as if to plunge into the flames. For a moment Siegfried thought of the old king, his father, who was waiting his return, then he banished the memory and, with one quick throb of joy at the peril he was rushing into, bent forward and spurred Greyfel into the fire. It was all over in an instant; he felt the scorching flames lick his face, then heard the horse's feet strike
20 upon solid rock, and he opened his eyes to look about him, realizing that he had ridden through the fire all unharmed, and full of wonder at his safety. Greyfel too, was unhurt, not a single hair

upon his mane was singed, and Siegfried offered a silent prayer to Odin, who had guided them through such peril.

He dismounted and looked about, and found that he was standing upon the rock which he had seen from below, and which he now saw was completely encircled by the wall of fire. But stranger even than this was the sight of a man lying full length upon the rock, and seemingly unconscious of the fire which was raging all around him. His shield was ¹⁰ on the ground beside him, but his helmet covered his face so that Siegfried could not tell whether he was dead or sleeping. His figure was youthful and his dress of richest texture, while the armor which he bore seemed too fine to bear the brunt of warfare. For a long time Siegfried stood beside the unconscious figure, wondering whether he had best awake the sleeper, or go away and leave him undisturbed. At last his curiosity became too strong, and lifting the youth gently, until his head ²⁰ rested on his knee, he raised the helmet and gazed with wonder and delight at the beautiful face beneath. Then, as the sleeper did not awake,

Siegfried took off his helmet, hoping thus to rouse him; but what was his surprise to see a shower of long golden hair fall down over the shoulders of the seeming youth. He started back so suddenly that the maiden awoke, and looking up at Siegfried said softly, "So you have come at last."

The young hero was too astonished to make any reply, but remained kneeling beside her, waiting for her to speak again. He wondered whether she 10 was really human, or only some spirit of the night. Seeing his surprise, the maiden smiled, and seating herself upon the rock she pointed to a place beside her and said:—

"Sit down, Sir Siegfried, and I will tell you my story, and how I came to be sleeping in this strange place."

Still wondering, especially at hearing himself thus addressed, Siegfried obeyed, and the maiden began:—

20 "My name is Brunhilde, and I am one of Odin's Valkyries, or choosers of the slain. There are eight of us who do this service, and we ride to battle on swift-winged horses, wearing such armor

as warriors carry, except that it is invulnerable. We go into the midst of the fight even when it is fiercest, and when any of the heroes whom Odin has chosen are slain, we raise him from the battlefield, lay him before us on the horse, and ride with him to Asgard, to the place called Valhalla. This is a beautiful hall made of gold and marble, and it has five hundred and forty doors wide enough for eight hundred warriors to march in abreast. Inside, its roof is made of the burnished shields of 10 heroes, and its walls are hung with glittering spears. Every day the warriors drink of the mead which is prepared for the gods themselves, and they feast on the meat of a wonderful boar which is daily slain and boiled in the great caldron, and which always comes to life again just before the heroes are ready to eat again. Sometimes Odin sits at the board and shares the feast with them, and when the Valkyries are not doing service on the battlefield, they lay aside their armor and clothe them- 20 selves in pure white robes, to wait upon the heroes.

“When the feast is over the warriors call for their weapons, and spear in hand they go out into the

great courtyard, where they fight desperate battles and deal terrible wounds, performing deeds of valor such as they achieved while on the earth. But in Asgard there is no dying, and if a hero receives a mortal wound, it is healed at once by magic power. Thus the heroes share the blessings and privileges of the gods, and live forever, having won great fame and glory. Now there was a certain battle being waged in a country far from
10 here in which one of the combatants was a prince whom I had sworn to protect. He was killed in the fight, but not before he had slain his enemy, a proud, wicked man whom Odin had, nevertheless, befriended. Him, the father of the gods bade me take to Valhalla, and leave my prince to the mercy of the conquerors. But I dared to disobey, and raising the prince from the ground, I put him upon my horse and carried him to Asgard, leaving Odin's chosen hero on the field. In punishment
20 for my disobedience and daring, the All-father took from me forever my privilege of being a Valkyrie, or shield maiden. He also condemned me to the life of a mortal, and then he brought me to

this rock, where he stung me with the sleep-thorn, and made this my sleeping place. But first he surrounded the rock with a wall of fire, and decreed that I should sleep here until a hero who knew no fear should ride through the flames and waken me. I am well versed in the lore of runes, and I read there long ago that he who knows no fear is Siegfried, the slayer of Fafnir. Therefore thou art Siegfried and my deliverer."

For a long time Brunhilde talked with him, and told him many wonderful things, of the brave deeds of famous heroes, and of bloody battles fought in far-off lands. She told him, too, of the lives of the gods in Asgard, and related strange stories of the giants in the frozen Northland, and of the elves in the mysterious underworld. And still Siegfried would hear more and more, and begged the maiden to impart to him her great wisdom, and teach him the lore of runes.

The circle of fire had now burnt itself out, but daylight had come, and Siegfried could plainly see the perilous ascent he had made up the mountain. Then Brunhilde took his hand and bade him fare-

well, and Siegfried watched her depart toward her castle in Isenland, feeling very lonely, and wishing he might follow her. But Greyfel's head was turned a different way, and Siegfried knew that Odin had other things for him to do, so he allowed the horse to carry him away from Brunhilde's country, though he would fain have gone thither. And Siegfried longed for the maiden, and sorrowed at parting from her, but Brunhilde had bade him go, since thus it was written in the runes that not she, but another, should be the wife of Siegfried.

SIEGFRIED AT GUNTHER'S COURT

FOR several days Siegfried rode across the country without meeting anyone who could tell him in what land he was, or whither the roads would lead him. At times he longed to return to his father's palace, and again he hoped that Odin was conducting him to new adventures which would prove great enough to enroll him on the list of heroes. He wished to gain fame and honor for his trusty Balmung by performing brave deeds, yet his zeal was but half-hearted, for he had lost ¹⁰ Regin, his only friend, and must now continue his journey alone. The maiden, too, whom he desired, had bade him farewell, and gone to her home in Isenland, whither he might not follow. There seemed no longer any motive for traveling further, and he felt discouraged and lonely. He was weary also of the endless miles of forest and mountain, and his whole venture ever since he began his

journey, looked only vain and foolish. He thought, indeed, that he might as well turn back, yet even then he knew not in which direction to go; so he let the reins lie loosely on Greyfel's neck, and trusted to Odin to lead them.

One night he slept in the very heart of the forest, and in the morning he was awakened suddenly by the loud neighing of Greyfel. He started up to see what had so aroused the horse. He was impatiently pawing the ground, and seemed very much disturbed. Siegfried went nearer, but could see nothing to cause him such uneasiness. He stroked the horse's head, and tried to soothe his apparent distress; but still Greyfel moved restlessly about, and struck the ground heavily with his feet. It almost seemed as if he were trying to tell something which his master could not understand. Siegfried shook his head sadly and said, "Hast thou no way to speak to me, my best of
10 friends, that I may know what it is thou meanest? Would that I knew thy language as I do that of the birds, and then thou couldst tell me why thou art so distressed."

He caressed the horse for some time, hoping thus to quiet him, and then returned to his seat upon the grass. He had been there but a moment when he felt, all at once, as if a thousand needles had been thrust into his back, and turning to find what had caused this sudden pain, he was astonished to see behind him a host of tiny warriors, all armed with little bows whose arrows they were rapidly shooting at him. At first the sight was very strange and interesting, but gradually the weapons ¹⁰ became so numerous that Siegfried was painfully conscious of hundreds of them sticking all over his body; and still more were being thrown by the pygmy host. So he rushed angrily upon them, and tried to strike or tread on them, but each time they eluded him with wonderful swiftness; and no matter how quickly he moved, they were always at his back with their bows and arrows in full play.

It was now getting to be a serious matter, this ²⁰ encounter with the dwarfs, for they had begun to attack Greyfel also, and the poor beast was frantic with pain and fear. At last Siegfried

drew his sword, and determined to kill his tiny enemies, but even Balmung was of no avail. The dwarfs seemed to melt away when he struck at them, and appeared again behind him. Yet in spite of his anger and the stinging pain of the arrows, he was alert enough to notice that the dwarfs made no attack except when and where their leader directed, and that although this leader spoke no word, the whole army seemed to understand his directions by signs. Siegfried therefore bent all his energy upon capturing the leader, who was much larger than the rest of the dwarfs, and conspicuous for the scarlet suit he wore. All efforts were, however, in vain, for although Siegfried's movements were quick and sure, he was no match for the wily elf who seemed to slip out of his fingers at the very moment he believed he had him fast. Once or twice Siegfried seized the dwarf and felt his hand close securely about him, 20 but in a moment there appeared to be nothing there. He began to doubt his own senses, for he surely felt himself holding on to something, though he could see nothing in his hand. After several

of these bewildering experiences, Siegfried knew that he was being tricked, so the next time he caught the dwarf he held on firmly, and though his hand appeared to be empty, he began to tighten his clasp. Suddenly there came a shrill scream: "Stop, stop, you are choking me. Let me go, and I will promise to harm you no longer."

But Siegfried only grasped the invisible dwarf more tightly and said: "Swear that thou wilt give me this magic power of being unseen and I will ¹⁰ set thee free; otherwise I will strangle thee to death."

"I swear," came feebly in reply, and as Siegfried unloosed his clasp, he saw the dwarf fall limply to the ground from his hand. By this time the attacks of the swarthy elves had ceased, so Siegfried sat down beside their leader and waited to see what would happen next. Presently he turned to the dwarf and said, "Who are you, and why have you come thus against me?" 20

When the dwarf had recovered enough to speak, he replied: "My name is Alberich, and I was sent by my master, Andvari, to slay you before you

could go to the dragon's cave and take possession of the hoard."

"I wish no hoard," exclaimed Siegfried, passionately. "There is a curse which rests upon it, and I have no heart for further scenes of bloodshed. Let it stay where it is in Fafnir's cave."

"Then yield it to my master," cried Alberich, eagerly.

"Nay, I will not do so," answered Siegfried,
10 "for he got it by theft and guile, and should therefore rightly forfeit its possession. Let it remain where it is, and when the curse is removed—as it surely must be some day—I will come to claim it, since you tell me that it is mine."

"Then farewell," said Alberich, and he started away, but Siegfried caught him quickly, saying: "How now, thou cunning elf. What of the oath thou didst just swear concerning thy invisible power?"

20 "True," answered the dwarf, "I had forgotten the promise, but the swarthy elves never prove false to their word. Here is the magic Tarn-kappe," and he handed a cloak to Siegfried. "It

will render you invisible when you place it upon your shoulders, and it will also give you the strength of ten men. It seems small, but it can assume the size of its wearer. Take it, therefore, for you have fairly won it."

Siegfried took the cloak, and then as the dwarf was leaving him, he said: "Thou art a good servant, Alberich, and shouldst work for a better master than the one thou hast. Give me thy service, and become the guardian of the hoard until the day ¹⁰ when I shall take possession of it. Wilt thou do this for me?"

"Yes, gladly," exclaimed the dwarf, "and from this day I own Siegfried for my liege lord, and hold myself the keeper of his treasure, which I will guard faithfully, even with my life."

"Be it so, then," said Siegfried, "and some day I will amply reward thee."

So Alberich bade him farewell, and disappeared with his host of tiny warriors among the trees, and ²⁰ Siegfried mounted Greyfel and once again started on his journey.

He now left the forest region, and rode into the

open country, hoping to meet with some one who could tell him whither he was faring. Whenever he could, he kept on the well-traveled roads, and here he often met with other men, but they all seemed to be wanderers, like himself, and could tell him little of the country or the people. In return they would ask him whither he was going and what was the object of his journey, but to all questions he offered no reply save that he was
10 traveling in search of adventures. But at heart he had no desire for adventures. He had grown weary of his solitude and his aimless wandering, and longed for the companionship of men. One day, late in the evening, he found himself on the edge of a thick forest. He did not wish to enter this, for it looked dark and impenetrable, and already Greyfel was picking his way among brambles and over uncertain ground ; so he turned the horse's head and prepared to go back to the road.
20 he had lately left. But Greyfel knew better than he where to go, and persisted in moving forward, into what seemed to be the heart of the forest. In a moment, however, Siegfried found that they were

not stumbling helplessly about, for he heard the sharp, clear sound of the horse's hoofs upon a hard road, while the glimmer of many lights in the distance told him that he was not in a forest wilderness, but near some great city. Soon he met a man on horseback, and inquired of him what country this was, and whither the road would lead him.

"This is Burgundy, sir," answered the stranger, "and yonder is the city where King Gunther himself dwells. There you are sure of finding shelter¹⁰ and entertainment for the night."

Siegfried thanked him, and spurred Greyfel toward the city.

In the palace of King Gunther a great feast was being held. There was wine in costly beakers, and meat served upon plates of gold. At the place of each guest was a silver goblet, and these were often lifted high as the company drank to the health of good King Gunther. While the men feasted and drank, the women of the house-²⁰hold, Queen Ute and her daughter Kriemhild, stood at the palace windows looking down the road to see if some strolling minstrel might not

be passing by who could be summoned in to help them beguile the weary hours. Suddenly Kriemhild, the beautiful sister of King Gunther, exclaimed that some one, probably a minstrel, was coming toward the castle. The queen's eyes followed her gaze, and for a while both watched the approaching figure with great interest. Then Queen Ute said:—

“That is no wandering harper, child, for he is riding; and see how nobly he sits his horse. It is some knight with tidings from a far country, or some king come hither to claim your brother's hospitality. But summon Hagen and question him concerning the stranger.” So Kriemhild called her uncle to the window, and asked him whether he knew who the rider might be.

Hagen was the oldest and most formidable warrior in all the land of Burgundy. He was tall and powerfully built, and gave the impression of great strength in spite of his gray hairs. His face was dark and deeply furrowed, and the frown which he always wore made him look grim and stern, as indeed he was. He had never been

known to care for anyone, or to show the least regard for even his own sister and her household. Only toward Gunther, his liege lord, did Hagen have perfect loyalty and a kind of doglike fidelity, which kept him ever at the king's side in the midst of the fiercest battles, and constant in his service at the court when Gunther needed his advice or support. He was famous, too, for his skill in statecraft, and in all matters of government was considered wiser than any of the king's other ¹⁰ counselors. He also added to this a wonderful knowledge of men and things, and could recount the deeds of famous heroes, all of whom he knew by name and lineage.

When Hagen came to the window at Kriemhild's request, he looked out for some moments in silence, then he said: "The youth whom you see approaching is Siegfried, the slayer of Fafnir, and owner of Andvari's hoard. It would be well for the king if he made this man his guest." 20

The queen thereupon hastened to send word to the porters to open the palace gates and invite the stranger to enter. Then she herself, accom-

panied by Gunther and Hagen, and followed by a retinue of knights, went to the great door of the palace and welcomed Siegfried to Burgundy. The young hero was surprised and pleased at such a cordial reception, and when the king urged him to remain with them some days, he gladly consented, and prepared to rest after his months of wandering.

Many feasts were now given, and games were held in Siegfried's honor, to which all the princes of Burgundy were invited. The king would not allow him to speak of leaving them, and Siegfried was readily persuaded to stay yet longer, for the days passed quickly and happily at Gunther's court. The king became his friend and constant companion, and the beautiful Kriemhild often talked with him. Only Hagen kept aloof, grim, silent, and distrustful.

About this time Gunther became involved in a war with some of the neighboring princes, and as the number of his forces was much inferior to that of the enemy, he feared defeat and the possible loss of his crown. In the beginning of the con-

flict, many of the battles went against him, and he grew daily more fearful lest it should end in the overthrow of his kingdom. After one especially disastrous battle Hagen came to him and said:—

“Why does Siegfried sit idly here in the palace, while we are on the battlefield? Bid him help us before it is too late.”

“Nay, he is our guest,” replied the king.

“What of that,” cried Hagen, impatiently; “he has been here long, and as he holds himself ^{to} your friend, your cause should be his also. We need help, and he alone is powerful enough to turn the tide of the battle in our favor. He has Alberich’s magic Tarnkappe, and the sword Balmung which was forged from the pieces of Odin’s famous Gram; so that with Siegfried on our side no enemy can stand against us. Entreat him, therefore, and speedily, for each day our forces are losing in great numbers.”

Feeling that he was guilty of a great breach of ^{to} hospitality, Gunther sought out Siegfried, and after telling him of the plight of the Burgundians, begged him to aid them.

“Right willingly will I join thee, my friend,” said Siegfried. “There is naught that I would gladlier do than help thy cause. I would have been at thy side long since had not thy gentle sister besought me not to go to battle, and assured me that thy forces were more than a match for the enemy.”

The next day Siegfried fought with the king, and then victory followed victory for the disabled ranks of the Burgundians. The soldiers rallied under his leadership, and went boldly into the fight, while the enemy fell in great numbers beneath the terrible strokes of Balmung. A sudden panic came upon the hitherto victorious host, and they fled in terror before Gunther’s pursuing army. This decided the battle in favor of the Burgundians, and the leader of the enemy offered to make terms of peace. So the war was ended, and the heroes returned to their homes to exchange the sword and shield for the milder pleasures of the palace.

Soon after this Hagen came again to King Gunther and said: “This great victory has proved how

strong an ally we have in Siegfried. It were well, therefore, to keep him with us, lest trouble arise again and we need his help. Let us bind him to our house by some close tie, and as no bond is closer than marriage, you must wed him to your sister Kriemhild, who already looks upon him with favor."

"But that cannot be, much as I desire it," answered Gunther, "for Siegfried will not wed with my sister, since his heart yearns for Brunhilde, and he is even now planning to seek her in Isenland."

"All this is true," answered the wily Hagen; "and while Siegfried longs for the shield maiden nothing can be done; but summon your mother hither, and bid her mix for him a draught of forgetfulness. She is skilled in magic potions, and will give us such help as we need."

Gunther sent at once for Queen Ute and told her of Hagen's plan, to which she willingly offered²⁰ her assistance, and that night when Siegfried returned from a journey to a neighboring city, she offered him a cup into which she had put

a magic drink which made him forget Brunhilde and his ride through the wall of fire. Then he turned more kindly eyes upon the beautiful Kriemhild, and before many days went by, sought her hand in marriage of Gunther and the queen. Even to the unfriendly Hagen did he urge the acceptance of his suit.

When it was known throughout the kingdom that such a powerful prince as Siegfried was going to ally himself with the house of Burgundy, there was great rejoicing among the people, for Siegfried had already made himself both feared and beloved. The wedding festivities lasted several weeks, and many costly gifts were distributed by King Gunther among his vassals. Soon Hagen caused it to be whispered about that Siegfried had brought no gift to his bride, and that he lived, with empty hands, upon King Gunther's bounty. When this rumor reached the bridegroom he grew pale with angry pride; then, in the presence of all the court, he made a formal gift to Kriemhild of all his treasure, — the hoard of Andvari, — forgetting, in his resentment and wounded pride, the curse

which still rested upon it. But Gunther and his people were delighted with the magnificence of the bridal gift. Even Hagen felt satisfied, for he knew not of the curse, and hoped sometime to induce Siegfried to have the hoard brought to Burgundy.

GUNTHER'S WOOING OF BRUNHILDE

SIEGFRIED'S days passed happily at Gunther's court, and now that he had become the husband of the beautiful Kriemhild he desired nothing better than to spend his life beside her in the pleasant land of Burgundy. Ever since the day of his marriage all of his former life seemed to be shrouded in mist. He but dimly remembered the forging of Balmung and his fight with the dragon Fafnir, while the meeting with Brunhilde had, owing to the magic potion, passed wholly from his memory. He was very happy with the lovely and gentle Kriemhild, who had wedded him believing that she alone had won the young hero's heart, for her mother had spoken no word to her of the Valkyrie whom Siegfried loved, or of the draught which had been given to make him forget her. As for Siegfried, he was proud of being chosen above all the other suitors

who came to win the hand of Gunther's beautiful sister; and he was sure that there lived upon the earth no maiden fairer than the peerless Kriemhild.

One day there came to the palace an old harper. His hair was white and his figure bent with age, but he could still play wonderful music, and sing bravely of the deeds of heroes. Many days and nights he sang in the great hall of the castle, and the listeners never wearied of his music. Sometimes he laid aside his harp and told strange tales of his wanderings; and one night as he sat before Siegfried and King Gunther at the feast, he spoke to them of a certain country called Isenland, where dwelt a beautiful maiden whom many kings and princes had sought to wed. "But," continued the old man, "she has never yet been won, for she is a warrior queen, and to those who seek her hand she proposes a trial of strength with the condition that he who loses in the contest must also lose his life. This has daunted many a suitor, for the fame of the maiden's strength has spread far and wide, yet there have been some brave men

who have dared to try, and failing, have forfeited their lives."

"But why is she willing to marry, if she has more than a man's strength, and can go to battle like any warrior?" asked Gunther.

"She does not wish to do so," replied the harper; "but it is written in the runes that she must wed, so she will yield only to the hero whose strength can surpass her own, and therefore she proposes this contest."

"What is her name?" asked the king.

"It is Brunhilde," answered the old man, and at this Gunther looked fearfully at Siegfried, wondering if the name would bring back to him the memory of his ride through the fire and his meeting with the Valkyrie. But on Siegfried's face was a look of entire unconcern, and he smiled as the blood rushed into Gunther's cheeks, and cried:—

"Look now at the king's face, Sir Harper, and see how quickly thou hast found another victim for the warrior maiden. Methinks he is already eager to behold her beauty and win her for his queen. How is it, friend Gunther?"

"Even as thou hast said," replied the king, "for I would fain risk my life to gain this wonderful maiden."

Indeed, Gunther was so much in earnest in his wish, and so determined to journey to Isenland, that no advice from Hagen could turn him from his purpose, neither were the gentle pleadings of Kriemhild of any avail. He would have Brunhilde and no one else for his queen.

When it was settled that he should go to Isen-¹⁰land, Hagen came secretly to him and said, "If you are really bent upon going on this foolhardy journey, and desire to risk your life for a woman who is doubtless not worth the winning, take Siegfried with you. He has the sword Balmung with which to fight your battles should you be beset with foes, and he has also the magic Tarnkappe which may bring you out of many unknown difficulties. Urge him, therefore, to go with you."

Gunther did as Hagen had advised, but it needed ²⁰no urging to obtain Siegfried's ready consent to accompany the king. He had grown somewhat weary of the quiet, uneventful life at the court,

and longed for new adventures. The beautiful Kriemhild wept and besought him not to go into a far country, and on an undertaking fraught with many dangers; but Siegfried only laughed at her fears, and bade her get his clothing and armor ready for the journey. To Gunther he said: "There is one thing you must do if you wish me to accompany you, and that is to give me your promise not to take any train of warriors with us,
10 but to go alone with only Hagen and your brother Dankwart."

This seemed a very singular demand, and Hagen declared that the king should not listen to it; but Gunther trusted Siegfried's discretion, and was willing to be guided by his wishes, so he consented, and no one prepared for the voyage to Isenland save those whom Siegfried had chosen.

Kriemhild and her maidens spent many days making rich garments and embroidering costly
20 robes, for she wished to have the warriors of Burgundy apparelled as became their rank. Queen Ute, also, brought out from her large chests many fine fabrics and rare jewels, and with threads of

purest gold worked beautiful pieces of raiment, that Gunther and his friends might make a suitable appearance at the court of Brunhilde. But it troubled her that no retinue of lords was to be allowed to attend the king, as was customary when royalty traveled abroad; and she felt some resentment toward Siegfried for compelling the ruler of all Burgundy to go to a foreign court with no followers save three of his own kinsmen.

While Queen Ute and Kriemhild were busy at ¹⁰ their needlework, the ship on which the king was to sail was made ready, and fitted up with all things which might be needed on the voyage. The most skillful rowers in the kingdom were placed at the oars, and at last the ship was launched and the sails set. There was much weeping at the departure of Gunther and his friends, and the watchers on the shore felt that they were going away, never to return. But the heroes themselves were eager for the voyage, and full of hope that their ²⁰ adventure would be successful,—all but Hagen, who stood on the deck, grim-visaged and scornful, for he had no faith in this foolish undertaking,

though he would have followed his king to the ends of the earth.

The voyage to Isenland was long, but no peril of wind or weather followed the ship, and no dangers of rocks and shoals marred the pleasure of the journey, or hindered the good ship's speed. When at last they came in sight of a rocky coast, and saw on the top of the cliffs a tall, fortified castle with frowning towers, Hagen told them that
10 they had now reached Isenland, and that before them was the palace of Brunhilde. It looked very forbidding, and Gunther began to doubt if, after all, this venture had been a wise one; but Siegfried was light-hearted as ever, and the gloomy towers brought him no anxiety or fears. As they were about to land he said to the king:—

“One thing further you must do if we wish to win in this undertaking. Tell every one at Brunhilde's palace that I am your vassal, and have come
20 hither at your command to attend you.”

Gunther looked surprised at this demand, but he consented, and on the way to the castle Siegfried followed behind the king, as became a vassal and his lord.

From her chamber window the queen was looking down upon the knights as they rode toward the castle, and calling her maidens to her she said: "Who are these strangers that have come to our gates? They seem of noble bearing, yet they have no attendants, so cannot be of royal blood. Let some one go to meet them, and inquire of their names, and why they have voyaged to Isenland, for in the harbor yonder I see a white-sailed ship."

One of the maidens went away at the queen's bidding, and soon returned breathless with excitement.

"It is Gunther, king of Burgundy, my lady," she cried, "and with him are his brother and uncle, and a noble youth named Siegfried. I hear that they have come to match strength with you in the games."

When Brunhilde learned that it was Siegfried who was at her castle gates she trembled with delight and surprise; for *she* had been given no draught of forgetfulness, and she well remembered the brave youth who had ridden through the fire and wakened her from sleep. If he had come to

win her, she hoped that his strength was equal to his valor, and that it would surpass her own. — For the first time since Odin took away her shield and with it the glory of being a Valkyrie, she felt glad that she was a mortal maiden.

Word was sent to the lords within the castle to let down the drawbridge, and welcome the strangers to Isenland. The queen also bade them give the guests the best which the palace afforded, and
10 do everything which would make for their pleasure and comfort. When she herself was arrayed in her costliest robes, she descended to the great hall of the castle. There, seated upon a marble throne, and surrounded by her chosen warriors, she received the stranger knights in royal state. To Gunther, who approached first, she offered her hand and bade him welcome. This courtesy she also extended to Dankwart and Hagen ; but when Siegfried stood before her she rose, and taking both
20 his hands in hers, she said softly: “So thou hast come again to seek me, Sir Siegfried, but this time not in blindness. It is long since we last met, but thou art not forgotten, and there is no one

whom Brunhilde would gladder see within her halls."

Siegfried at first seemed bewildered at her words; then a troubled look passed over his face, and he rubbed his eyes as if awakening from sleep. He gazed long into the queen's face, murmuring, "Brunhilde — the Valkyrie — the wall of fire." Then all at once a mist was lifted from his eyes; he remembered his ride through the flames, the sleeping maiden, and all of the past which had¹⁰ been so long forgotten.

Brunhilde saw the change in his face, but she mistook its meaning. She thought that he had carelessly forgotten her, and was now trying to recall some memory of her. So her soft manner turned to hardness, for her pride was hurt, and maiden shame forbade her to show favors to one who could so easily forget her. During all his stay at the castle she kept aloof from Siegfried, and treated him with more coldness than she²⁰ showed even to the grim-visaged Hagen.

As for Siegfried, he knew that something had happened which had blotted out the memory of

Brunhilde during all the years he had been in Burgundy; and he knew also that if he could now choose his bride it would be the haughty queen who treated him so scornfully. But he was here as Gunther's friend and vassal, and to help Gunther win this maiden for his wife; so he laid aside his own regrets, and determined to do all in his power to further the king's suit.

Soon after the arrival of the Burgundians, a day ¹⁰ was set for the contest between King Gunther and the warrior queen. At the appointed time they assembled in the courtyard of the palace, and Hagen had many misgivings when he saw five hundred armed knights standing about whose faces betokened no good will to the strangers. However, it was too late now to retreat, and he muttered to the king:—

“We have truly come hither on a fool's errand; for whether you win or lose in this contest, we ²⁰ will never be allowed to leave this place alive.”

At this Gunther only laughed and said: “Thy gray hairs make thee full of fears, O Hagen; and thine age makes thee blind to the beauty of this

wonderful maiden, for whom a man might well risk his life. But fear not for me, as something tells me that I shall win."

And he went away, leaving Hagen to mutter curses on the whole mad adventure.

When Brunhilde appeared in the courtyard clad in her coat of mail, the four Burgundian warriors approached her, and Siegfried said, "My liege lord has come from far to match strength with thee, O Brunhilde, and should he win in the contest, there is none who will give thee allegiance as his queen more gladly than the humble and loyal vassal Siegfried."

To this Brunhilde answered coldly, "Does your lord know the conditions of the match, and the forfeit we demand should he lose?"

"He does," replied Siegfried; "but nothing outweighs the chance of possessing Brunhilde for his queen."

"Then we accept the challenge," said the maiden, and turning to one of her attendants she added, "Bring hither my armor, and let the games begin." The servants then brought her a golden

helmet, a corselet of finely wrought silver, and a shield broad and heavy enough for the most powerful warrior. After arming herself with these, her spear was carried in on the shoulders of three strong men. It was very long, and of such tremendous weight that no arm but Brunhilde's had ever been known to lift it.

While these preparations were going on, the Burgundian heroes were watching with amazement, half mingled with fear, and Hagen muttered aloud, "Shall we stand idly by and see our king slain by a woman's hand?" But Siegfried whispered in Gunther's ear, "Take courage and we shall win, only show no sign of fear." Then he slipped out of the crowd and hurried down to the seashore where the ship lay at anchor. Here he hastily donned his Tarnkappe, and then went back, unseen, to the courtyard where Gunther had already taken up his shield, and Brunhilde was poising her spear in the air ready to throw.

He took his stand close to the king's side and whispered, "Fear not, only do as I bid you."

Though he could see no one, Gunther knew it was Siegfried who was beside him, so he took courage and grasped his shield more firmly.

The signal was given, and Brunhilde hurled her spear at Gunther's shield. The blow was a terrible one, and both Siegfried and the king staggered beneath it. Borne down by the weight of the spear, and by the force with which it was thrown, Gunther would have been crushed under his shield had not Siegfried, with his tenfold¹⁰ strength, broken the force of the blow by placing himself in front. Then he quickly raised the king, and before the astonished spectators realized what had happened, he picked up the huge spear and sent it, apparently from Gunther's hand, back to Brunhilde. It sped with terrible swift-
ness, and struck her shield with a tremendous crash, carrying the warrior maiden to the ground. In a moment she recovered, and rose, flushing with shame and anger. Going to where the king stood,²⁰ she said :—

“That was a noble blow, King Gunther, and I count myself fairly beaten at this first match, but

you must win also in casting the stone and in leaping."

As she spoke, ten men came forward, carrying an immense stone upon their shoulders. This the maiden raised easily in her white arms, and swinging it once or twice above her head, she threw it to the further end of the castle yard, some fifteen fathoms away, and then leaped after it, landing just beside it.

10 The followers of Brunhilde shouted with delight, and every face showed pride in their wonderful queen; but Dankwart trembled with fear, and old Hagen bit his lip and cursed the day that had brought them to Isenland. At Gunther's side, however, was Siegfried, still whispering courage to the king, who could not see his friend, though he knew who it was that was winning the contest for him. Together they walked to where the great stone was lying, and
20 Siegfried raised it from the ground, while it seemed to the spectators that it was lifted by the king's hand. Then he swung it above his head, and hurled it across the courtyard, where it landed

far beyond the spot from which Brunhilde had first thrown it. Immediately he seized Gunther in his arms and sprang after the stone, reaching the very place where it lay half buried in the earth.

The warrior maiden could do naught but own herself beaten in all the games, and though her face showed disappointment and chagrin, she offered her hand to Gunther, saying:—

“We acknowledge ourselves defeated, my lord,¹⁰ and from henceforth Brunhilde is no longer her own master, but the wife and vassal of the king of Burgundy,” and turning to her knights and attendants, she bade them acknowledge Gunther as their rightful lord. That night there was great feasting in the palace, though the hearts of the people of Isenland were heavy at the thought of losing their queen. She herself strove to appear happy and proud at becoming the wife of a hero whose strength surpassed her own; yet while she seemed²⁰ to honor her liege lord and husband, her heart longed for Siegfried, and she rued the day that had brought the Burgundians to Isenland.

HOW BRUNHILDE CAME TO BURGUNDY

AFTER many days spent in feasting and merriment, Gunther told his queen that they must return to Burgundy, for it was long since he and his friends had set out on their journey to Isenland, and if they stayed much longer at Brunhilde's palace, his own people would give them up for dead. So he bade the queen prepare for her departure, and told her that she might bring with her to Burgundy as many of her own followers as it pleased her to choose. He advised her, however, not to overburden the good ship which had brought them thither with chests of raiment and household goods, since Queen Ute could amply provide all that Brunhilde might desire. He told her also to leave behind her whatever wealth she had at her disposal, for the rich lands of Burgundy yielded more than enough to satisfy

the proudest heart. The queen therefore opened her chests full of gold and silver, and divided them among her knights and among the poor of her kingdom. Her rich robes, and all the costly apparel she had worn, she gave to her maidens, and made ready to take with her only a small part of her possessions. While preparations were being made for the departure of Brunhilde to the country of her liege lord and husband, Hagen was fuming uneasily at the long delay, and predicting ¹⁰ all manner of misfortunes if they did not speedily leave Isenland. Gunther tried to allay his fears, and said : —

“Thou art restless, Hagen, because thou art old, and cannot share thy lord’s joy in having won this peerless maiden for his queen. There is really no cause for alarm, for the people here are friendly to us now that I am their acknowledged king. Besides, have we not Siegfried with us, and how can we fear any harm when he is here to protect us ?” ²⁰

“Yes, yes,” answered Hagen, angrily, “to be sure we have Siegfried with us, but it is always Siegfried whom we have to lean on like a babe on its mother.

Before he came among us, we ourselves were counted warriors worthy to be feared; but now it is always Siegfried who fights our battles, guides our ship, and brings us out of all our difficulties. It is Siegfried, too, who wins us a warrior maiden whom we would never have conquered alone, weak and nerveless men that we are. It is Siegfried, always Siegfried, and I hate his very name."

"Nay, now, good Hagen," said the king, soothingly, "these things should not provoke thee to jealousy, but rather make thee hold the youth in respect and honor. What would Burgundy do without Siegfried?"

"That is just it," retorted Hagen, bitterly. "Burgundy is naught except as she holds this foreign prince in her court. She boasts no warrior so valiant, no soldier so dear to her people as this man who came to us a stranger. Better far that he should return to his own country than to stay longer among us."

"Nay, nay," answered Gunther; "if Siegfried is so beloved by our people, it is a greater reason for his remaining with them."

But Hagen shook his head, and muttered something which the king did not understand.

Everything was at last ready for Brunhilde's departure, and she bade a sorrowful farewell to all her household and to all the people of Isenland. Then she embarked on the white-sailed ship with the four Burgundian warriors ; and in a few days was far out of sight of the land she loved, and being borne toward a country unfamiliar and unwelcome. For even though she had been forced ¹⁰ to own herself conquered in the games, Brunhilde had never been willing to become Gunther's wife, or to go with him to his home across the sea.

The voyage was quickly and pleasantly spent to all except the queen, who sat upon the deck, moody and silent, ignoring all Gunther's efforts to divert her. Siegfried felt happy at the thought of returning to the beautiful Kriemhild, though his heart was heavy with fear that the coming of Brunhilde to Burgundy would bring trouble ²⁰ and sorrow in its train. The evident dislike which the queen felt for King Gunther boded no good for the future to him or to his friends.

Only toward Hagen did she show any kindness, and her overtures of friendship were, strange to say, very willingly met by the grim, reserved man. She would talk for hours with Hagen when no one else could get from her a moment's notice, and the gray-haired old warrior seemed ever ready to please and serve her.

At last the voyage was over, and the king was again in his own land and among his own people. 10 Great rejoicing was made over his return, and feasts were held for many days in honor of the wonderful maiden who was now King Gunther's wife. But though everything was done for her pleasure, and many princes of the provinces of Burgundy came to do homage to their queen, Brunhilde remained ever moody and silent. The gentle Kriemhild tried in vain to induce her to join in the feasting and merriment, but Brunhilde refused, almost angrily, and sat apart, brooding 20 over her unhappy lot. After a time Gunther sought his mother, Queen Ute, and begged her to give Brunhilde some drink which would make her forget Isenland, and so be content to dwell with

him. Queen Ute shook her head, and said sadly that she had nothing which could accomplish this for him.

The king went next to Hagen and said, "You have won Brunhilde's confidence, my uncle, tell me therefore why the queen is silent and unhappy?"

At this Hagen laughed mockingly and whispered: "Ask your noble friend Siegfried whom you love and trust so fully what it is that makes Brun-¹⁰hilde's heart so heavy with longing, and so full of bitterness. He can tell you far better than I." But shame and pride forbade Gunther to go with his troubles to Siegfried, so he kept silent, and waited for time to cure the queen's grief.

Things went on in this way for some years, for nothing seemed to change the haughty queen, or soften her dislike for all of Gunther's household except Hagen. He remained her devoted follower, and her one confidant and friend. Toward the ²⁰gentle Kriemhild she showed both jealousy and aversion, though the sweet and friendly wife of Siegfried was at a loss to understand the reason

for her sister-in-law's behavior. One day Brunhilde and Kriemhild were walking together in the palace garden, and as they were about to enter the great feasting hall, Kriemhild, being a little in advance of the queen, was just crossing the doorway when Brunhilde called out angrily:—

“Do you presume to enter before me, your queen? you who are the wife of a vassal?”

“I am no vassal,” retorted Kriemhild, quickly,
10 “for Siegfried owns allegiance neither to you nor to any other.”

“That is a lie,” cried Brunhilde, wrathfully, “for when Siegfried came to Isenland, he declared that Gunther was his liege lord, and himself a humble vassal.”

“That was only to save your pride,” answered Kriemhild, now dropping her angry tone, for she saw that the queen was in a towering rage.

“Gunther deceived me then,” stormed Brun-
20 hilde, furiously; then she added mockingly, “Since Siegfried is no vassal of the king's, I suppose he is a much greater and richer prince; that he is braver also, and stronger, and could outstrip the king in

a contest of strength such as that in which Gunther won me for his wife."

"Even so," replied Kriemhild, "for it was really Siegfried who outdid thee in the games, and not Gunther at all."

Saying this she passed quietly into the hall, while Brunhilde stood at the door too bewildered by her words to speak. At length she realized the meaning of Kriemhild's speech. Full of anger and fearful suspicion she sought out Hagen, and demanded that he should tell her all he knew of Siegfried's part in the contest. And Hagen told her how Siegfried had put on his Tarnkappe, which gave him the strength of ten men, and stood beside the king unseen; how he, and not Gunther, had flung the spear, and hurled the stone, and made the wonderful leap; how it was Siegfried alone who had gained the victory, and he who should rightfully have won her.

Upon hearing this, Brunhilde wept in anger and sorrow, and said bitterly: "I might have known that none but Siegfried could claim the warrior queen for his bride. That fool and weakling,

King Gunther, is no mate for Brunhilde, and never would he have called me wife had I not been tricked and deceived. He is a coward, and merits all the hatred and contempt I have shown him." Then her anger grew fiercer than ever, and she swore vengeance upon those who had wronged her.

"Cherish not thy wrath against the king," said Hagen, "for it is Siegfried who has brought this trouble upon you. He has been a source of evil ever since he came among us, and he will yet be the king's bane, yea, and thine also. It were better that he died, — and soon."

"He shall die," cried Brunhilde. "I will call Gunther hither and taunt him with his weakness and cowardice. Then if he is a man he will avenge me of this insult which Kriemhild has put upon me."

So she summoned the king to her presence and poured forth the story of her wrongs, bidding him slay Siegfried if he ever hoped to merit anything but her hatred and contempt. The king listened to her words, but though he felt ashamed

of the sorry part he had played, he would not give her the promise she desired, for he loved Siegfried, and could not find it in his heart to kill him, even to win Brunhilde's love. Seeing that neither threats nor pleadings would move him, Hagen begged the queen to leave them, and give Gunther more time to make his decision. So Brunhilde went away, and when Hagen was sure that there was no danger of her returning, he came close to the king and whispered:—

“Blind fool that thou art. Dost thou not see even yet why the queen has been unhappy ever since she came to Burgundy? She loves thy friend Siegfried, and it is he whom she would fain call husband and lord!” Then he left the king alone, and Gunther sat for a long time thinking over what Hagen had said. He felt discouraged and sick at heart; for he knew that he was unable to solve the difficulties before him, or to avert the dreadful fate which seemed to be overshadowing him and all his household.

THE DEATH OF SIEGFRIED

SHORTLY after this Hagen came one day to the king, and said: "As long as Siegfried lives there is naught that will appease the wrath of Brunhilde, or make her cease to weep. If you would have peace for yourself and would win the queen's love, it must be by Siegfried's death."

"But I cannot slay him, Hagen," answered Gunther, sadly; "he is my friend, and also my brother, and I cannot do such a treacherous thing."

"There is no need for you to perform the deed yourself. Only consent to having Siegfried killed, and another hand than yours will carry it out. It is useless to try and pacify the queen so long as Siegfried lives to arouse daily her jealous wrath. Consent, therefore, to his death," urged Hagen, "and I myself will slay him and take all the burden of the guilt upon my shoulders."

For many hours he talked with the king, working

upon a weak will and unsteady purpose, and rousing in Gunther the jealous fear that Siegfried would play him false. There seemed, indeed, only one way out of the difficulty, and at last Gunther consented to Hagen's wish, and promised to aid him in carrying out his plans. Having won over the king, Hagen went away, determined to avenge the wrongs of his beloved queen, and rid the kingdom of one whom he had long feared and hated.

Hagen had often heard it whispered about the palace that some magic charm kept Siegfried from ever being wounded in battle, and further, that no weapon made had the power to harm him; so before he could develop any plans, he must find out with certainty whether the report was true or false. There was but one person who would be likely to know this, so one day when Siegfried had gone out with the king, Hagen went to Kriemhild, and seating himself beside her he inquired kindly if she were very happy as the wife of Siegfried. ²

Kriemhild looked surprised at this unexpected visit from her uncle, for he seldom took any notice of her; but she thought that he was prompted to a

show of interest in her by his fondness for Siegfried, so she welcomed him gladly and answered his question in a way to settle all doubts concerning her happiness, had her uncle really felt any. Hagen smiled at her reply, and said:—

“Then what will you do if Siegfried is wounded in battle, and brought home dead upon his shield?”

“That cannot happen,” answered Kriemhild, “betrayed into further confidence by Hagen’s seemingly affectionate interest.

“But such things do happen, even to the bravest warrior,” persisted Hagen, “unless it be true, as I have sometimes heard, that Siegfried is invulnerable.”

Not dreaming of his purpose in asking this question, Kriemhild proudly replied, “It is indeed true, and that is why I have no fears when my lord goes to battle.”

“Was this great gift from Odin?” asked Hagen.

Now Kriemhild knew that Siegfried had forbidden her to speak of this matter to any one, but she thought there could surely be no harm in revealing

the secret to one so devoted and loyal as her uncle, so she told Hagen all about the slaying of Fafnir; how Siegfried had been bathed in the dragon's blood, and was thereby made invulnerable.

"Was he completely covered by the stream of blood?" asked Hagen, with great interest.

"Yes," answered Kriemhild, "he was bathed from head to foot, except one small spot upon his shoulder, on which a leaf happened to fall."

"Are you not afraid that he may be struck in that place by a spear or arrow, and so meet his death?"

"It might indeed be so," said Kriemhild, "but I do not fear it."

"Still," persisted Hagen, "it would be well to have some one always near Siegfried in battle, to guard him against any death-blow, and since I alone know of his point of weakness, let me be the one to protect him. And that I may be the better able to shield him, do you sew a mark upon his coat over the exact spot on his shoulder where the leaf fell, so that when we are beset by enemies upon the road, or go forth to battle, I may keep beside him and guard him from possible evil."

Kriemhild was greatly moved by this evidence of loyalty in Hagen, and thanking him warmly for his devotion, she promised to sew upon Siegfried's coat some mark by which the vulnerable spot could be known. Then she hurried away to begin her task, not dreaming of Hagen's wicked purpose in obtaining her secret.

Some days later Hagen proposed that there should be a great hunt given in one of the neighboring forests, and Gunther, who had promised to aid him in his plans, urged Siegfried to accompany them. Siegfried gladly consented, for he had greatly enjoyed this sport since his first coming to Burgundy, and had spent many a pleasant hour with Gunther and his knights in search of deer or fox, or the fierce wild boar. In all of these expeditions he had been foremost in the hunt, and had usually borne off the prize, both in the size and number of his game. His spear was long, and shone brightly
20 as he rode along mounted on the faithful Greyfel, and his aim was so quick and sure that his weapon never missed its mark, but went straight to the heart of the beast he was pursuing. This superi-

ority in the chase added much to Hagen's anger and jealousy, for as Siegfried had proved himself the greatest of warriors on the battlefield, so in the hunt he was the peer of all the knights of Burgundy.

A day was set for the great hunt, and a forest was chosen which was famous for the number and fierceness of its wild beasts. Then early one morning Gunther, Hagen, and Siegfried set forth with their knights, in full expectation of having a profitable as well as exciting day. It was a beautiful ¹⁰ morning in early spring, and the spirits of the hunting party rose high as they cantered out of the city gates and made their way toward the forest. Siegfried rode ahead of the party, with Gunther and Hagen beside him. His suit was of royal purple, embroidered richly by Kriemhild's loving fingers, and his spear shone bright in the sunlight as he galloped along, light-hearted and unsuspecting of the black thoughts which were harbored in Hagen's wicked heart. He looked so ²⁰ brave and joyous, so beautiful as a youth and so gallant as a knight, that all the warriors in Gunther's train said among themselves that no one

in Burgundy was fit to be compared to Siegfried. These remarks soon came to Hagen's ears, and jealousy hardened him in his determination to slay this foreign prince whom all his own countrymen would so gladly make their king in place of the weak and unwarlike Gunther. He hid this feeling, however, and kept close to Siegfried's side, looking eagerly for the spot upon his shoulder where the loving but foolish Kriemhild had sewed
10 the fatal mark.

The hunting party soon came to the edge of the forest, where they divided into three groups. Each leader took with him a party of followers and they set out in different directions, with the agreement that when the sun was overhead they should meet at a well-known place where Gunther had arranged that their dinner was to be brought. Siegfried galloped away, and a greater part of the knights followed him. Hagen saw this and
20 frowned darkly, but he said nothing, only waited for Siegfried to get out of sight. Then he whispered to the king:—

“To-day is the day for our deed. This must be

the last time that your friend Siegfried flaunts his superiority over the king."

Gunther trembled and answered weakly:—

"Must it be done, Hagen? Is there no other way to rid our kingdom of him?"

"No way but by his death," replied Hagen, firmly; then he added: "and do not you give way to foolish fancies, or my plans may fail. I have no womanish scruples, and Siegfried must die to-day."

10

Not wishing to have it appear that anything unusual was in preparation, Hagen ceased to confer with the king, but summoned his knights to the chase, and putting spurs to their horses, they started through the forest. But something in the faces of the leaders made the men only half-hearted in their eagerness for their hunt, and a spirit of silence and gloom spread over the whole party. They hunted all the morning, but their success was small, and when they finally drew up at the 20 meeting-place, they found that they had very little spoil to boast of. The men had already come from the castle with great baskets of provisions,

so the knights dismounted, and sat upon the grass to await the coming of Siegfried.

Soon they heard the loud blast of horns, and the joyous hallooing of men mingled with the barking and yelping of hounds; and in a moment Siegfried and his followers came in sight. They shouted merrily to their comrades, and galloped forward to join them, while those seated upon the ground looked with delight and surprise at the beasts
10 which had been slain by Siegfried's skillful hand. There was a large black bear of the kind which was known to be so fierce that it was well-nigh impossible to kill or capture him. There was also a huge wild boar and three shaggy wolves, besides a great number of smaller animals, such as the fox and deer. The knights were all loud in their praises of Siegfried's wonderful skill, and he took their homage gladly, seeming wholly unconscious of Hagen's cruel face or Gunther's averted
20 eyes.

Soon the midday feast was ready, and the men sat down to eat. Some of the game they had caught that morning was roasted and placed before

them, and they ate almost greedily, for the sport had given them sufficient excuse for hunger. Presently Gunther said : —

“Is there no wine to accompany our meat? To eat without drinking is but a poor way to feast.”

The attendant to whom he spoke answered : —

“There was no wine provided, my lord.”

“How is that?” demanded the king, angrily.

“It was Prince Hagen’s command,” replied the servant, humbly, and at this Hagen interposed, ¹⁰ saying : —

“Why should the king ask for wine when not a hundred rods away is a beautiful stream more clear and sparkling than the finest wine? Let us go there and quench our thirst.”

“Very well,” said Gunther; “and for my part, I am satisfied with the drink you offer. It remains for my guest to declare himself content.”

At this Siegfried rose and exclaimed eagerly : —

“If that fear weighs upon thee, let me prove ²⁰ how little thou shouldst cherish it. I will go first to the stream, and come and tell thee how pure and sweet is its water.”

“Let me show you, then, the way,” said Hagen, and as he and Siegfried moved away together, he asked hesitatingly: —

“Will you run a race with me, Sir Siegfried, to see which of us will reach the stream first? For though I am much older than you in years, I was accounted a famous runner in my time.”

“Gladly,” replied Siegfried, and they started off toward the stream. But although Hagen went 10 with wonderful swiftness considering his years, he could not outrun the fleet-footed Siegfried, who reached the goal some minutes before Hagen came up.

“Thou art truly a swift runner, even now, friend Hagen,” he cried gaily, “and I can easily believe thy boast that thou wert once the most famous runner in the kingdom.”

At this Hagen smiled and said: —

“But what are we poor men, even the best of 20 us, beside the noble Siegfried, who can outstrip all the warriors of Burgundy, no matter what the contest may be?”

“Nay, thou art over zealous in thy praise,”

laughed Siegfried, but he was pleased with Hagen's friendly words, for he did not detect the undertone of jealousy and anger. Then courteously he bade Hagen drink of the stream, but Hagen answered:—

“Do you drink first, and let me follow you, for though you would yield the courtesy to me because of my age, I would rather give precedence to you as the better runner. Drink, therefore, but first lay aside your armor, for the weight of it ¹⁰ might throw you into the stream.”

Siegfried, ever trustful and unsuspecting, threw off his coat of mail and laid his spear beside it, thus leaving unprotected the inner coat on which Kriemhild had sewed the fatal mark. Then he knelt upon the ground, and stooping over put his hand into the stream and prepared to raise the water to his lips. At this moment Hagen, with catlike swiftness and cunning, caught up Siegfried's shining spear, and aiming it directly ²⁰ toward the mark, hurled it with all his force.

The weapon sank into the stooping body, and with a groan Siegfried rolled over upon the ground.

As soon as he was able he turned to see who had done this cowardly deed, and only when he saw Hagen fleeing in guilty haste could he believe that the blow was dealt by one who so lately seemed his friend. Siegfried put his hand feebly to his shoulder, and when he found where the spear had struck, he knew that his wound was mortal. But he made one great effort to rise, and gathering together all his strength, he drew out the spear and started in pursuit of Hagen. The treacherous murderer had fled for protection to the king, and thither Siegfried followed him, but before he reached the astonished and horror-stricken group who were watching his approach, the blood began to gush forth from his wound, and he sank helplessly to the ground.

The whole company of knights knelt down beside him, weeping and lamenting over the loss of their leader. One of them raised the dying hero's head and placed it upon his knee, while others tried to stanch the blood from his wound. Siegfried, however, bade them cease their efforts, for his end had now come. Then he turned to

Hagen, and upbraided him for his cowardly deed, and for his treachery in obtaining the secret of his vulnerability from Kriemhild to use it in such a dastardly way. His strength was now almost exhausted, and his eyes began to close; but suddenly he roused again, and said to the trembling and terrified king:—

“Thou hast played a coward’s part to thy friend who trusted thee, O Gunther, and some day thou wilt bitterly repent of having aided thine uncle in ¹⁰ his wickedness. But for this I will not reproach thee, for thou art already sorrowing. One thing only I ask of thee, and do thou promise it, and make what amends thou canst. Take care of thy sister Kriemhild, and do not let Hagen’s vengeance extend to her. Though thou hast proved an unworthy friend to me, yet I commend my wife to thy keeping. Wilt thou swear to protect and cherish her?”

“I swear it,” replied Gunther, now weeping ²⁰ remorseful tears.

“Then see that thou play the man, nay, be for once the king, and keep thine oath to the dying.”

As he finished these words, Siegfried sank back lifeless into the arms of the knight who supported him. All at once the clouds overhead grew fearfully dark, and the air seemed full of a strange, ominous stillness. The birds stopped their singing, and the forest was silent with the hush of night. The warriors stood weeping beside the body of their slain leader, but no one dared to speak. Slowly and sadly they raised Siegfried 10 from the ground, and placing him on their shoulders bore him to the place where the faithful Greyfel was standing, patiently awaiting the coming of his master. One of the knights led the horse, while a solemn procession followed, bearing the body of the dead hero.

When the sorrowful procession reached the city gates, and the news was spread that Siegfried was slain, and by the hand of Hagen, there was great mourning throughout the city, and beneath the 20 wail of sorrow was a muttered undertone of threat toward the man who could do such a cowardly and treacherous thing as to kill the friend who

trusted him. But Hagen faced the people, calm and grim as ever, and said boldly:—

“Let all the guilt of this deed rest upon me, for it was by my hand that Siegfried died. Now there is but one lord of Burgundy, King Gunther, and no longer now shall Brunhilde sit in tears, for the insult put upon her is avenged.”

THE LAST OF THE HOARD

THOUGH the news of the death of Siegfried had spread throughout the city, no one dared to bring the dreadful tidings to Kriemhild, who sat in her bower with her maidens, waiting her lord's return. The day was now far spent, and she began to wonder at his long delay, when the sound of some disturbance in the street reached her chamber windows, and she looked out to see what the unusual noise might be. At first she feared it was an outbreak of war, but the solemn procession which was wending its way toward the palace was not martial in its bearing, but full of the awful stillness of a funeral march. She saw that some one was being borne on the shoulders of the men — some one dead — and the others were his mourning followers. She wondered what it could be, and why they were bringing him to the palace. Among the group of knights

who formed the funeral train, she presently discerned the figures of Gunther and Hagen, and she began to tremble with fear and dread foreboding when she saw that Siegfried was not with them. She strained her eyes to see if she could recognize the features of the dead, but she was too far away, and could not see; so she waited fearfully by the window, while the procession wound its way through the courtyard, and then into the great hall. Unable to bear the suspense any longer,¹⁰ she left the room and hurried down to meet her brother and learn tidings of Siegfried. But the moment she entered the hall, the faces of the men told her all she wished to know, and she did not need to inquire who the dead might be.

Every one in the palace shared the grief and hopeless sorrow of Siegfried's gentle wife, and all the city mourned with her in the loss of one so greatly beloved as the hero whom Hagen called a "stranger." As long as the first shock of Siegfried's tragic death engrossed all of Kriemhild's thought and feeling, she did not realize the part which Hagen had played in the event; but as the

days went by and she had time to think of all that had gone before, she remembered how her uncle had traitorously obtained the secret of Siegfried's vulnerable spot from her, and how she herself had, at his request, sewed the fatal mark upon her husband's coat. She had heard that it was by Hagen's hand that Siegfried met his death, yet she could not believe him guilty of such a terrible deed. So one day she went weeping to 10 Hagen, and asked him to tell her by whom Siegfried was slain.

"The story of such things is not for a woman's ears," replied Hagen, "and whether he died by my hand or another's is of small moment. It was the will of the Norns, who rule the life of every man, that he should die, and their decrees no one of us can change or avert."

When the day was set for the great funeral fires to be lit, all the princes of Burgundy came 20 to attend the solemn festival, and sought to do homage to the dead hero by bringing rich gifts to be laid upon the funeral pyre. This imposing structure was erected in front of the palace, and

on the appointed day the foremost lords of Gunther's household brought the body of Siegfried from the palace where it had lain in state, and placed it sorrowfully upon the funeral pyre. Beside him was laid his armor and his magic Tarnkappe, and last of all the famous sword Balmung. The king had ordered that Greyfel be carefully guarded for fear that if he were brought upon the scene, he would leap into the flames and perish with his master.

10

Around these things which were sacred to the memory of Siegfried, the princes of Burgundy piled their most costly gifts, and everything was ready for the fires to be lit. But no one of Gunther's men could bear to place a torch to the wood, and a dreadful stillness fell over the whole assembly. At length Hagen came boldly forward and laid a burning brand to the pile of logs which formed the funeral pyre. In a moment the whole structure was ablaze, and the hungry flames leaped 20 upward toward the sky. Gunther stood by, trembling and fearful, lest Odin should send some terrible retribution upon the one who had slain

his chosen hero. Kriemhild, weeping, hid her face in her hands, for she could not watch the dreadful fires. On the faces of all the watchers was reflected a great sorrow, for no prince of Burgundy was so dear to them as Siegfried, even though he came from a foreign land. Only Hagen showed no grief, or any sign of repentance for his deed, but stood by unmoved, like a grim, avenging god.

10 Then suddenly a figure appeared in their midst, wild and disheveled, and seemingly mad with grief. It was Brunhilde, once a Valkyrie, come to claim her slain. Turning to the astonished group of mourners she cried exultingly : —

“Look, you people of Burgundy, for the last time upon your queen whom you have ever seen fulfilling the common lot of mortal woman, and know that I was once a shield maiden, one of Odin’s Valkyries. I was condemned to eternal
20 sleep by the great All-father, but was rescued by Siegfried, the hero who knows no fear. And here he lies who rode through the wall of fire to waken me ; and who won me in the games by his godlike

strength, though your cowardly King Gunther made false claim to me. Here lies Siegfried, the chosen hero of Odin and the true mate of Odin's warrior maiden. Therefore for him alone does Brunhilde own her love, and to him alone will she be wed. The Valkyrie yields only to the greatest hero." Saying this she leaped upon the funeral pyre, and in a moment had perished beside Siegfried in the flames.

And what of the ill-fated hoard upon which ¹⁰ still rested Andvari's curse?

When the shock of the terrible events connected with Siegfried's death was over, and quiet was once more restored to Gunther's palace, Hagen came one day to the king and said:—

"You remember that Siegfried gave all of his treasure to Kriemhild on their wedding day, and although the hoard was never brought to Burgundy it still remains in the possession of your sister. Entreat her therefore to have it conveyed ²⁰ here; and to accomplish your end more easily, tell her that she can honor Siegfried's memory by distributing his wealth among the poor. When

we get the treasure into our hands, we will see, however, that nothing so foolish is done."

The weak-willed Gunther, always under the control of Hagen, accordingly sought Kriemhild and told her what great things could be done in honor of Siegfried, if only the treasure in the dragon's cave could be placed at her disposal. Kriemhild was not suspicious of her brother, for she did not know what part he had played in Siegfried's death, so she listened readily to his words, and said: —

"It shall be done even as you say, for naught can now bring me solace in my grief save some way to make the name of Siegfried dearer to the hearts of the people."

Then she handed Gunther a ring which Siegfried had given her, and which he had told her would insure the obedience of the dwarf Alberich, the keeper of the hoard, to any one who would present the ring and claim the treasure.

20 The king took the ring from Kriemhild, and hastened with it to Hagen, who at once set to work to make preparations for conveying the hoard to Burgundy. In a few days a great number of

wagons were fitted up, and with these a hundred men were dispatched to gather all the treasure and bring it back to the palace. Although most of the men were Hagen's own followers, he could not trust them to go alone on this important mission, so he placed Siegfried's ring upon his own finger and led the expedition himself.

The hoard was found securely stowed away in Fafnir's cave, and not a single gem had been taken since Alberich became the guardian of the treasure. ¹⁰ When Hagen presented Siegfried's ring, and said that he came in Siegfried's place to take the hoard away, Alberich consented, though with great reluctance. He would have preferred to deliver it to its lawful owner, yet Siegfried himself had told him, after his gift of the treasure to Kriemhild, that whoever came bearing this particular ring should be given due respect and obedience. Alberich could therefore do naught but submit to Hagen's claim, and assist him in bearing away the ²⁰ treasure. Some days later the company which had set out from Gunther's palace empty-handed, came back laden with such wealth of gold and precious

stones that all the riches of Burgundy seemed nothing in comparison. This was all stored safely in Gunther's palace, and Kriemhild was very glad to find so much wealth at her disposal.

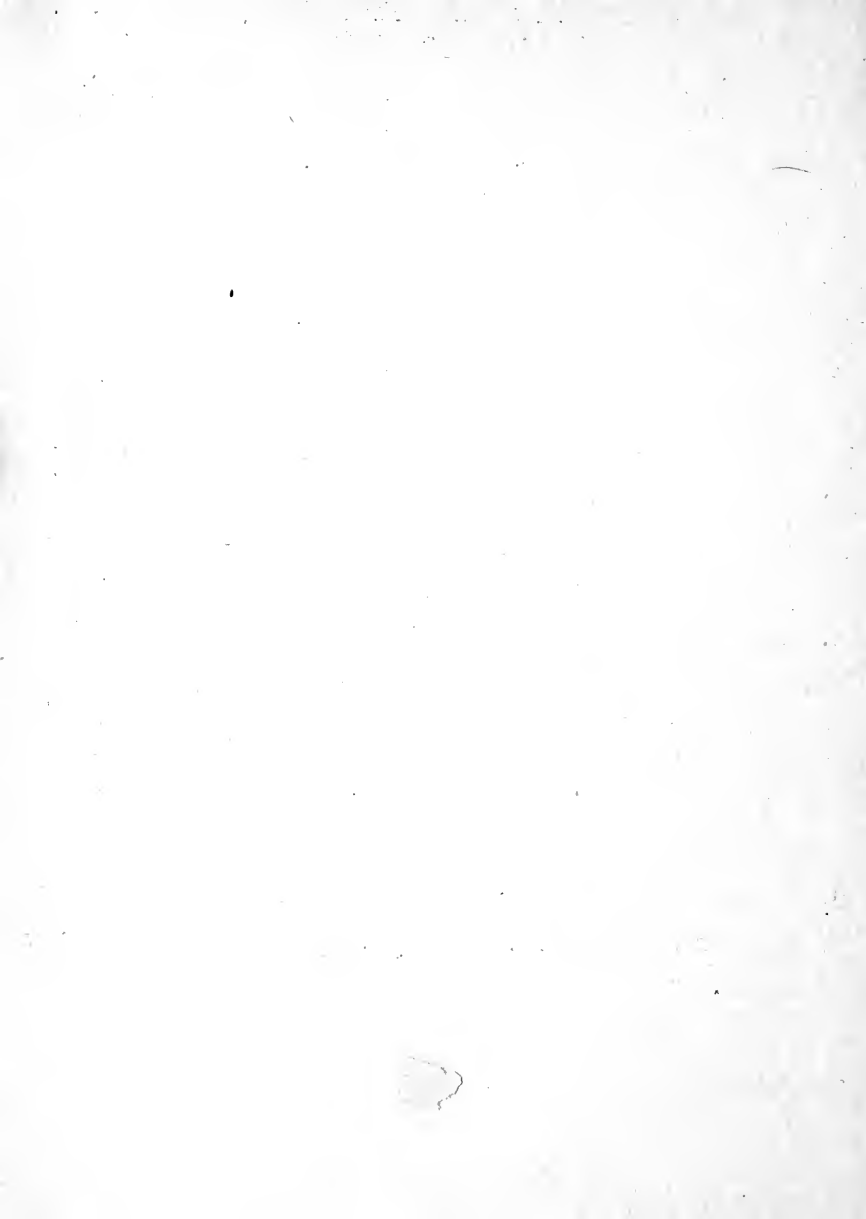
She became very lavish in her gifts, and eager to pour out all her riches, if only it brought added honor upon Siegfried's memory. No one who came to beg alms of her ever went away empty-handed, and the palace was always full of suppliants for her bounty. This extravagant giving went on for some time, until one day Hagen came to the king and said:—

“If your sister continues to distribute so much gold among the people, we will soon have them idle and rebellious, and they will then be useless to us in time of warfare. Bid her therefore to cease her giving.”

But Gunther answered, “I have brought enough sorrow upon her through my evil deeds, and if this
20 lavish giving can soften her grief, let her continue to dispose of her wealth as it pleases her, even though she should exhaust all the treasure that is in the hoard.”

Hagen determined however that it must not be so, and seeing that he could get no help from the king, he planned to gain his end by other means. So he made every appearance of approving Kriemhild's lavish gifts, and in time prevailed upon her to give him access to the treasure, that he might help her in disposing of it. Then one dark night he gathered together a band of his own followers, and stole all that remained of the hoard. They carried it from the palace by a secret passage, and brought it down to the river, where Hagen sunk it many fathoms deep. Neither he nor any one else could ever regain it, but at least it was out of Kriemhild's hands.

Thus was the hoard of Andvari, with its fateful curse, placed forever beyond the reach of men, but the charm and the mystery which hung around its very name still lingered through all the centuries that followed; and to-day the sailors upon the river Rhine are looking for some glimpse of the sunken treasure.



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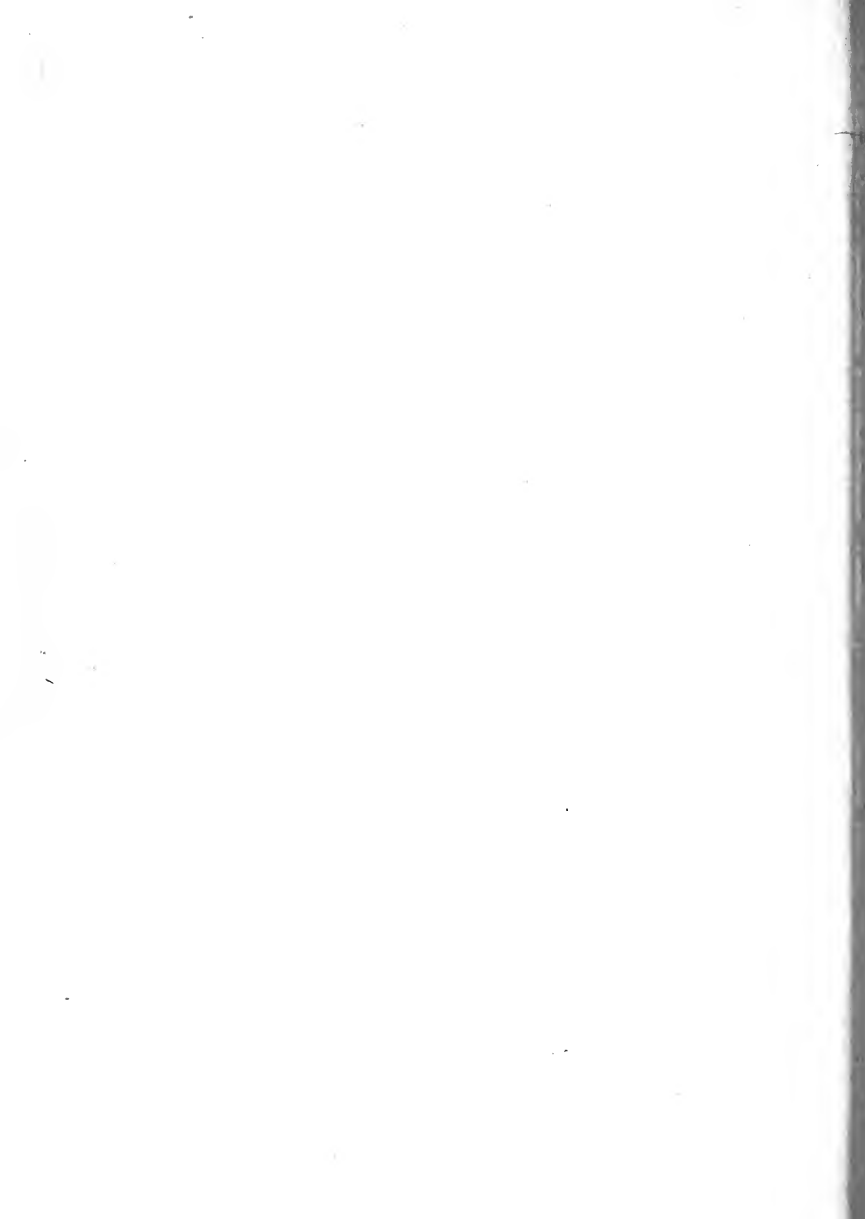
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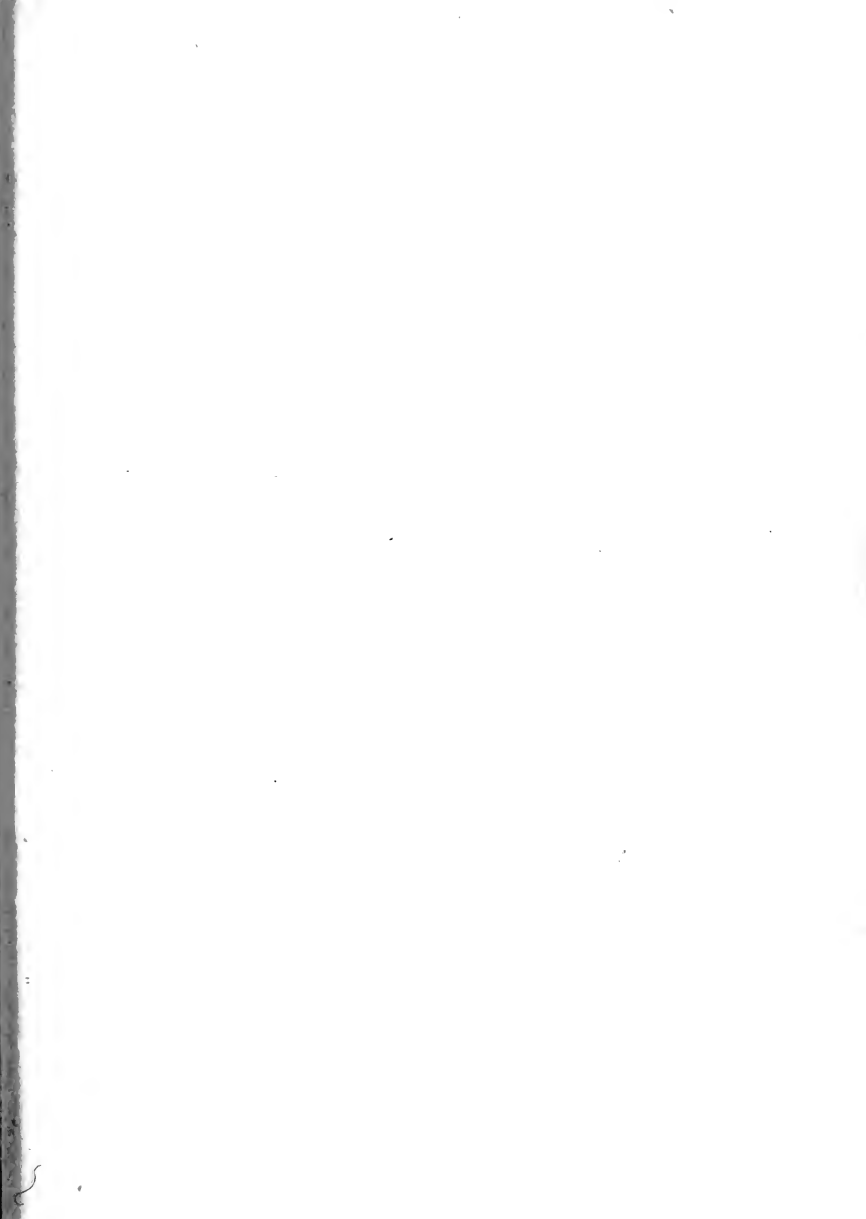
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